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SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

EVANGELICAL, DEVOTIONAL AND *PRACTICAL.*

ADAPTED TO THE PROMOTION OF

CHRISTIAN PIETY, FAMILY RELIGION

AND

YOUTHFUL VIRTUE.

BY JOSEPH LATHROP, D. D.
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MARCH 1807.

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SERMON I.

The Fear of God.

MY CHILDREN,

DAVID, in the thirty-fourth Psalm, and the eleventh verse, speaks to you in these words:

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me. and I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

DAVID was appointed, when he was young, to be king over Iſrael, God choſe him, in preference to his brethren, not becauſe he was ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon; but becauſe he was of a pious diſpoſition—a young man after God's own heart. "For the Lord ſeeth not as man ſeeth; man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

This godly king deſired, that all his people ſhould fear God; for, then, he knew that God would make them proſperous and happy. He deſired, that children, as well as others, ſhould learn to fear God; for they were a part of his people; and if they feared God when they were young, he hoped they would ſerve him when they were old; and would alſo teach their children to ſerve him; and thus the people would be virtuous and happy from generation to generation.

He calls upon children to *hearken to him.*

You, who are children, need inſtruction. Knowledge is not born with you. You have not had time to learn much by ſtudy and experience. What you obtain in your childhood, muſt come chiefly by information from others.

You have need of knowledge, for you have ſouls to be ſaved, as well as they who are older. And the religion by which you are ſaved muſt begin with knowledge.

If you would underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God, you muſt incline your hearts to underſtanding—You muſt hear inſtruction and not refuſe it.

You muſt hearken to your parents. God has commanded them to train you up in the way in which you ſhould go—to teach you knowledge and make you underſtand doctrine—to give you line upon line, and precept upon precept. It is their duty to point out to you the narrow way which leads to life, and to caution you againſt, and reſtrain you from, the broad path of ſin and death. God will puniſh them, if they neglect to inſtruct and warn you. They know what is uſeful, and what is hurtful to you—they are concerned for your happineſs. This is the reaſon why they ſo often ſpeak to you about God and heaven, about ſin and hell; and why they ſometimes deny you the things which you deſire.

You muſt hearken to them—not only hear, but remember what they ſay, and obey them in the Lord, for this is right. When you are abſent from them, you ſhould think, what they have told you; not to lie, or ſwear, or quarrel, or ſpend your time fooliſhly; and you ſhould behave as if you were within their reach, and under their eye.

You muſt hearken to miniſters. Jeſus Chriſt, who died for our ſins, as ſoon as he roſe from the

dead, met with Peter, one of his apoſtles and miniſters; and almoſt the firſt thing he ſaid to him was, "Peter, if you love me, feed my lambs;" i. e. teach my little children. Chriſt calls you his lambs to ſignify that you ſhould, like them, be innocent and harmleſs. He commands his miniſters to teach you, that you ſhould be holy and without blame before him in love. If miniſters are to teach you, then you muſt hearken to them. When you, on the Lord's day, go to his houſe, remember that he is there. He has ſaid, that where his diſciples meet together, he is in the midſt of them. John beheld Jeſus, on this holy day, walking in the churches. And He has eyes like a flame of fire. He ſees every thing that is done or even thought. Go then, take your place decently—ſtay in it quietly—watch your thoughts carefully—hear God's word diligently—endeavour to underſtand what you hear, and to remember it, that you may repeat it when you go home, and practiſe it every day.

Conſider now, what the good king of Iſrael promiſed to teach children. He ſays "I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

"To fear God, and keep his commandments, is the whole duty of man."

1. You muſt know, that there is a God; a great, wiſe and good Being, who created you at firſt, preſerves you ſtill, and ſupplies your wants continually. You cannot fear and ſerve him, until you know him.

You have often been taught, and I ſuppoſe you believe, that there is a God. You cannot ſee him, for he is a ſpirit—No man hath ſeen him at any time. He is inviſible. But his works you may ſee, wherever you go, and wherever you look: hence you know that there is a God.

If you ſhould go into the wilderneſs, and there ſhould find a houſe neatly built and finiſhed off; but ſhould find no perſon near it; what would you think? Would you ſuppoſe the houſe grew there, juſt as the trees grow? No; you would know ſomebody had been there to build it, as certainly as if you had ſeen it done. "Every houſe is builded by ſome man: And he that built all things is God." You know that this world, and the things which are in it, did not make themſelves; and therefore you certainly know, there is ſome unſeen Being who made them; and this Being is great, and wiſe and good.

2. If there is a God, you ought to fear him. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence of all that are about him."

If you would know what it is to fear God, conſider what it is to fear your parents. You underſtand what the word means, when it is applied to them. Its meaning is much the ſame, when it is applied to God. To fear your parents is to eſteem and honour them, to pleaſe and obey them, to ſpeak well of them, and behave decently to them. The ſame tempers and diſpoſitions are implied in fearing God. You muſt remember, however, that as God is infinitely greater, and wiſer, and better, than the beſt earthly parents; ſo you muſt regard him more than them.

I will here teach you why you muſt fear God; and how you muſt fear him.

First: I will ſhew you, why you muſt fear God.

1. You muſt fear him, becauſe he is a *holy* Being.

"He is of purer eyes than to behold evil; he cannot look on iniquity." "He cannot be tempted of evil; neither tempteth he any man." The

angels are often in ſcripture called holy; and good men are ſometimes honoured with the title of ſaints, or holy perſons. But the holineſs of God ſo much exceeds the holineſs of the moſt perfect creature, that it is ſaid, "He only is holy." "He charges his angels with folly." "The heavens are not clean in his ſight." "He humbleth himſelf to behold the things which are in heaven." The glorious train of angels in God's temple above, cover their faces before him, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hoſts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

When Moſes, in the wilderneſs, ſaw a buſh on fire, and not conſumed, he knew that this denoted the ſpecial preſence of God; and therefore it is ſaid, "He hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God."

When the prophet Elijah heard the ſtill voice of God, "he wrapt his face in a mantle." He had before felt a ſtrong wind, and a violent earthquake, which rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks; and he felt them without any terrour upon his mind. But when he heard a voice from the holy God, though it was ſtill and ſmall, yet it ſeemed ſolemn and awful; and he covered his face, becauſe he was afraid of God's preſence.

Now if ſuch holy men, and holier angels fear God, how much ſhould you fear him? He knows and hates every ſinful thought, wicked word, and vile action. How dare you, then, do, or ſpeak, or think, any thing which you know to be wrong?

2. You ſhould fear God, becauſe he is always *preſent* with you.

God is ſometimes ſaid to be in heaven, becauſe he there makes ſome ſpecial diſplays of his glorious perfections; but really he is every where. He is on earth: He is in this place: he hears what

I am ſpeaking; and he knows what you are thinking. "He ſearches you, and knows you. He knows your down-ſitting and your up-riſing, and underſtands your thoughts afar off. He compaſſes your path and your lying down, and is acquainted with all your ways. There is not a word in your tongue, but lo, he knows it altogether. You cannot go from his ſpirit, nor flee from his preſence. Darkneſs and light are both alike to him." Do you not fear this God?—You are afraid to do wickedly in the preſence of your parents. You ſpeak and act many things, when you are out of their ſight, which you do not choose they ſhould know. But remember, you cannot hide yourſelves from God. He always obſerves you. He looks you through and through. How dare you ever tell a lie? He hears you, and he abhors the deceitful child. How dare you ſpeak profanely? He knows every word you ſay, and he will not hold you guiltleſs when you take his name in vain. How dare you entertain wicked thoughts? He perceives them all; and a heart that deviſes evil imaginations, is abomination to him.

When you are in company, and at your diverſions, think of God's preſence; thus you will be made more watchful againſt ſin. If you are afraid at any time to be alone, think that a gracious God is with you, and put your truſt in him. When he guards you, nothing can hurt you. Pray to him in ſecret; he can hear you in every place, and will reward you openly.

3. You ſhould fear God, becauſe he is *powerful.* You fear your parents, becauſe they have power to puniſh you, when you offend them. God has more power than they, more than all men in the world, more than all creatures in the univerſe.

If he created this world and all creatures in it; if he created the ſun and moon, and all thoſe wonderful bodies of light which you ſeein the evening; and if he moves, and preſerves them all; then he is great, and of great power, and nothing is too hard for him.

You ſometimes ſee a little of God's power, in mighty winds, violent ſtorms, and terrible lightning and thunder. But theſe are only "the hiding of his power." He can deſtroy the world; yes, all worlds, as eaſily as he made them: And the ſcripture tells us, he will deſtroy them. "The ſkies ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and the works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up." Then all good men and good children will aſcend on high, to dwell forever with God, with Chriſt, and with holy angels: but the wicked ſhall be turned into hell; they ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment. Dreadful thought!

Children, do you not believe, that God has ſpoken this, and will do as he has ſpoken? How dare you, then, ſin againſt him? Who knows the power of his anger? What a fearful thing it is, for guilty creatures to fall into his hands?

4. You ſhould fear God becauſe he is *righteous*.

He not only hates ſin, but will puniſh impenitent ſinners. He often puniſhes wicked men and wicked children in this world, and will puniſh them more terribly in the world to come.

You have heard how he once poured a flood of water upon the earth, and deſtroyed all its inhabitants young and old together, except eight perſons, becauſe all but theſe had corrupted his way. You have heard, how he rained down upon Sodom a ſtorm of fire and brimſtone from heaven, and conſumed at once all the people who lived

there, except Lot and two of his children; because their wickedneſs was great, and they laughed and mocked at pious Lot, who warned them to repent. You have heard, how he made the earth open its mouth, and ſwallow up Korah, and a number of ungodly people, and their wicked children with them; becauſe they murmured againſt him, and would not obey his commands. They all ſunk down alive into the pit, with ſuch dreadful outcries, that the people who ſtood near fled away, for fear that the earth would ſwallow them up too. You have heard, how a number of profane children, who mocked at a godly prophet, were torn in pieces by wild beaſts—you have heard, how Ananias and Sapphira were ſtruck dead in a moment for telling a lie—you have heard, how the ſons of Aaron were conſumed by fire from God, becauſe they were profane in his houſe, and would not honour him, when they drew near to him.

From theſe things you know, that God will puniſh ſin. If ſuch is its puniſhment in this world, What will it be in the next? The men of Sodom, Chriſt tells us, muſt appear at the judgment. They ſuffered much in the deſtruction of their city. They muſt ſuffer much more in the place of torments. And yet it ſhall be more tolerable for them, than for thoſe ſinners who will not hear and obey Chriſt ſpeaking in his goſpel.

You ſhould fear God, becauſe he is *gracious* and *merciful.*

There is forgiveneſs with him that he may be feared. You are therefore required to fear the Lord, and his goodneſs. Though he hates ſin, and will puniſh obſtinate ſinners, yet he will forgive thoſe who repent. Have you not often ſeen, how ready your parents are to forgive your offen-

ces, when they ſee that you are ſorry for them? Now, as a father pities his children, ſo the Lord pities them who fear him. If a parent, who is evil, will give good things to his children, how much more will God, who is merciful as no other is, give his holy ſpirit to them who aſk him? He has no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that they would turn and live. He therefore commands them to repent—He calls to them, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" He ſent Jeſus Chriſt into this world to call ſinners to repentance. He gave up his own ſon to death in their ſtead, that they might live through him. Through Chriſt he will freely forgive all, who, being really ſorry for their ſins, forſake them, and pray for grace that they may, and reſolve through grace that they will, walk in newneſs of life.

Now you ſhould be afraid to ſin againſt God, who has done ſo much for you, and is ſo ready to pardon and ſave you.

Do you not ſometimes think how kind and bountiful God is to you? How he gives you health and food and raiment? How he preſerves and keeps you from day to day? Many have died younger than you: and many of thoſe who live, have not all thoſe comfortable things which you have. And beſides theſe earthly comforts, he has given his word to inſtruct you; his ſon to die for you; his ſpirit to work in you; and his promiſes to encourage you. Though you have ſinned, if you repent of ſin, and pray to him, he will be merciful to your unrighteouſneſs, and will remember your ſins no more.

The goodneſs of God ſhould lead you to repentance: But if you deſpiſe the riches of his goodneſs, you treaſure up to yourſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath.

I have ſhewn you, why you ſhould fear God. I will now,

SECONDLY, ſhew you, how you ſhould fear him.

If you fear him as you ought, you will be careful to pleaſe him in every thing, and watchful not to offend him in any thing.

1. If you fear God, you will deſire to know what he requires of you. You will not live careleſsly, and run along blindly, doing any thing, and every thing, whether right or wrong, juſt as it happens to pleaſe your inclination; but you will prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. You will read his word as you are able. If you cannot read it well, you will learn to read it better. You will attend when you hear others read it. You will hearken to your parents when they inſtruct you; and you will make enquiry, when you are in doubt, what you ought to do. You will not give all your vacant hours to ſport and play: but will take pains to improve in the knowledge of God and his will, that you may fear him more, and ſerve him better.

2. If you fear God, you will pray to him. And you will pray often—every day, every night and morning. You will humbly aſk him, not only to ſupply your outward wants, and preſerve you from death, but alſo to forgive your ſins and ſave your ſouls. You will daily look back and conſider what evil words you have ſpoken, ſinful actions you have done, and fooliſh thoughts you have indulged; and you will aſk God's mercy to forgive what is paſt, and his grace to keep you in time to come.

God loves to hear children pray to him. He has promiſed, that they who ſeek him early ſhall find him. It was ſaid of king Joſiah, that while he was yet young he began to ſeek the Lord, and

did that which was right in his ſight, and declined not to the right hand, nor to the left. And God made him to proſper. You muſt, as he did, ſeek unto God betimes; for God is nigh to them who call on him; eſpecially to thoſe who ſeek him early. David ſays to Solomon his ſon, "Know thou the God of thy father, and ſerve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind; for the Lord ſearcheth all hearts, and knoweth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou ſeek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off forever."

3. If you fear God, you will remember the ſabbath-day, and keep it holy. This is God's day; a day on which you are to honour him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleaſures, nor ſpeaking your own words. You muſt keep this day holy, that ſo you may ſerve God better every day. You muſt employ the whole of the day religiouſly; and eſpecially keep your hearts, when you go to the houſe of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the ſacrifice of fools. We read of ſome who are in almoſt all evil, in the midſt of the congregation and aſſembly. Let there be none of theſe among you. Think how pious Jacob felt, when he conſidered himſelf in the preſence of God. "Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place! This is no other than the houſe of God: This is the gate of heaven."

4. If you fear God, you will govern your tongues, knowing that for every ſinful, every idle word that you ſpeak, you muſt give an account in the day of judgment.

David ſays to children, "I will teach you the fear of the Lord—What man is he that deſireth life, that he may ſee good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking guile."

You muſt not take the name of God in vain; muſt not mock at holy things; muſt not talk of God, of heaven, of hell, in a careleſs, unmeaning, profane manner. If you thus talk, God will not hold you guiltleſs. You remember, that when little children ſcoffed at a good old prophet, God, in anger, ſent bears among them, which tare them in pieces. What then will become of you, if you mock God himſelf? Never ſpeak falſely. If you fear God, you muſt keep your lips from guile—from lying. "A lying tongue is abomination to the Lord." All liars ſhall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimſtone, in the place prepared for the devil and his angels: And it is juſt they ſhould have their part there, for they imitate the devil; they act as his children. He was a liar from the beginning, and is the father of liars.

Abhor all filthy and unclean talk. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is pure and wholeſome, and fit to be heard. Let not uncleanneſs be once named among you, nor fooliſh talking and jeſting; but let your ſpeech be always with grace; with decency and propriety, as becomes virtuous and holy children.

5. If you fear God, you will not contend and quarrel with one another, but will be friendly and peaceable. When David teaches you the fear of God, he ſays, "Depart from evil, and do good; ſeek peace and purſue it."

How odious it is for children to fall into violent paſſions with one another; to threaten and ſtrike in anger; and to uſe vile and provoking names! Chriſt ſays, "They whoare angry with others without a cauſe, and call them fools, ſhall be in danger of hell fire." He calls children "his lambs." You

know that lambs are innocent creatures. When you quarrel with one another, you act, not as Chriſt's lambs, but rather as young bears and wolves.

6. If you fear God, you will endeavour to do good according to your ability: and beſure, you will be careful to do no miſchief, to have no concern in any wicked plans that are propoſed. If ſinners entice you, you will not conſent; but will turn from them and paſs away: you will have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs; but will rather reprove them: you will ſay to evil doers, "Depart from us, for we will keep the commandments of God." We read of ſome, who ſleep not, except they have done miſchief; and their ſleep is taken away, unleſs they cauſe ſome to fall. Never join ſuch parties as theſe; for "a heart that deviſeth wicked imaginations, and feet that are ſwift in running to miſchief, are abomination to the Lord." And "a companion of fools will be deſtroyed."

7. If you fear God, you will honour your parents: For this is his command, "Honour thy father and mother, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayeſt live long on the earth." Speak of them with reſpect, behave toward them with reverence, obey them with cheerfulneſs, and regard their will, when you are abſent from them, as well as when you are preſent with them. Solomon ſays, "The eye that mocketh his father, and deſpiſeth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley ſhall pick it out, and the young eagles ſhall eat it." His meaning is, Such ungracious and wicked creatures, as mock and deſpiſe a parent, while children, will probably prove rogues and villains, when they grow up; ſo that God, in his wrath, will give them up to an untimely death,

and leave them to be devoured by ravenous beaſts and birds.

8. If you fear God, you will betake yourſelves to Jeſus Chriſt, the Saviour of loſt ſinners.

He came to ſeek and to ſave them that are loſt. When you compare your hearts and lives with God's holy law, you ſee that you have tranſgreſſed it. This law condemns every one who continues not in all things written therein to do them. Chriſt by his death hath redeemed us from the curſe of the law——you can have redemption only by faith in him as a dying Saviour. The fear of God, as a holy and righteous Being, will lead you to Chriſt, who came to ſave you from the wrath to come. The law of God is a ſchoolmaſter to bring you to Chriſt, that you may be juſtified by faith. Chriſt invites all weary and heavy-laden ſinners, all who feel their guilt and ſee their danger, to come unto him, that they may find reſt to their ſouls. Them who come to him, he will in no wiſe caſt out.

Finally: If you fear God, keep his commandments. Do what he requires, and ſhun what he forbids. Keep out of the company of wicked children, as much as you can, leſt you learn their ways, and get a ſnare to your ſouls. When you ſee evil in other children, reprove them; if they are ſo proud and ſcornful, that they will not regard you, deſire thoſe who are older to reprove them. "He that converteth a ſinner from the error of his way, ſhall ſave a ſoul from death, and ſhall hide the multitude of ſins."

Thus, my children, I have taught you, what it is to fear God, and why you ſhould fear him. I hope you have hearkened, while I have been ſpeaking. Forget not what has been ſaid. Think of it after you go home, and pray God to impreſs

it on your hearts. If you knew you ſhould die, in two or three days, would you not regard what has been ſpoken? You know not how ſoon you ſhall die. Many die young. How happy it is to be always ready. If you live to be old, death is not far off. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days." God has called you to obtain ſalvation through Chriſt. Give diligence to make your calling ſure. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of ſalvation. If you deſpiſe God's calls and reſiſt his grace, when you are young, perhaps you will be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin, and rejected of God forever.

Hear then and regard the words of David in our text and the verſes which follow:—"Come, ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that deſireth life and loveth many days, that he may ſee good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking guile. Depart from evil and do good; ſeek peace and purſue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. But the face of the Lord is againſt them that do evil, to cut of their remembrance from the earth. Evil ſhall ſlay the wicked. But the Lord redeemeth the ſoul of his ſervants; and none of them that truſt in him ſhall be deſolate.

A PRAYER FOR CHILDREN.

ALMIGHTY God! Thou haſt created me by thy power, preſerved me by thy care, and ſupported me by thy goodneſs. From thee I derived my being, my reaſon, and all my powers. I am indebted to thee for all

that I have ; I am dependent on thee for all that I want ; and I owe to thee all that I can do. I would be humbled before thee for all my childish follies and youthful vanities ; for the corruptions of my heart, and the iniquities of my life. I pray thee, O God, to deliver me from my guilt, and cleanse me from my pollutions. Form my mind to the early love of true and substantial wisdom. Teach me to love, fear and serve thee, with all my heart. May I honour my Divine Saviour, know the truth as it is in him, feel the power of his doctrines, obey his commands, and be conformed to his example. I desire especially to imitate his example of youthful piety, virtue and wisdom. O that like him, I might not only grow in stature, but also increase in wisdom, and in favour with God and man. May I embrace the good, and abhor the evil which I see in others ; and, by my example, do something to encourage good and discourage evil, in all that I associate with. May I be a companion of them who fear God, and wisely shun the snares of wicked company. May I be kept from temptations, or, when they meet me, be enabled to overcome them. Give me grace to keep my heart diligently, to govern my tongue wisely, and to use my time profitably. May I daily mind the one thing needful, and faithfully attend to the care of my soul. May I daily act in the fear of God, and with a sense of the judgment to come. May I daily think of dying, and do something in preparation for my great change. And when death shall remove me from this world, may I, of thine abundant mercy in Christ Jesus, be received to thy presence in heaven. Take me under thy care this day, [or this night,] and, both by night and by day, may I be kept from sin. And, whether I sleep or wake, may I be preserved from harm ; and unto thee I will ascribe the praise, through Jesus Christ my Redeemer.—Amen.

SERMON II.

The Duty of Speaking to the Young.

ZECHARIAH ii. 4.

——Run ſpeak to this young man.

THIS young man was the prophet Zechariah, who ſeems to have enjoyed the ſpirit of prophecy in his youth. He flouriſhed toward the end of the captivity, when things were ripening for the reſtoration. The intention of the firſt part of his prophecy is to encourage the Jews in rebuilding their ancient city and temple. As he was converſing with an angel, whom he calls "the angel that talked with him," he ſaw another angel, with a meaſuring line in his hand, going, like an architect, to lay out the plan and take the proportion of the city, in order to its being rebuilded. And the angel, who talked with him, went forth, and this other angel went out to meet him, and ſaid to him, "Run ſpeak to this young man, ſaying, Jeruſalem ſhall be inhabited, as towns without walls; for the Lord will be a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midſt of her."

This meſſage to the young prophet was ſent on a ſpecial occaſion. There may be *many* occaſions which call on *us* to addreſs the young. Other young men are to be ſpoken to, as well as the

prophet; others are required to ſpeak to them, as well as the angel to ſpeak to Zechariah; there are other ſubjects on which the young need to be addreſſed, as important as that which called the prophet's attention. I ſhall therefore improve our text as a general direction to ſpeak to the young.

You will aſk then, *what young man* is to be ſpoken to?

Every one needs to have ſomething ſaid to him. But there may be ſpecial occaſions to ſpeak to ſome. You will find ſome who are ignorant, and need to be inſtructed; ſome who are raſh and precipitant, and need to be warned; ſome who are wicked and ungodly, and need to be reproved; ſome who are inattentive to their duty, and need to be exhorted. Every one has his temptations, his dangers, his weakneſſes, and his failings, and needs to be addreſſed in a manner ſuitable to his peculiar ſituation and character.

But what *occaſion* is there to ſpeak to the young man?

Speak to him, becauſe he is *unexperienced*; he has not had time for much obſervation and improvement. Hence through want of knowledge, he is liable to commit many groſs miſtakes, and to take many dangerous ſteps. Give him, therefore, the advantage of your better judgment, clearer foreſight and riper experience.

Speak to him, becauſe *temptations await him*, of which he is unapprized. This is with him a giddy age; a critical period. His paſſions are ſtrong, his imagination lively, his ſelf-confidence bold, and his forethought but ſhort. Hence temptations more ſuddenly ſurprize him, more eaſily overcome him, more powerfully bear him away, than, we hope, they will do at a riper age, when his ſenſes are better exerciſed to diſcern both good and evil.

Speak to him, becauſe *one wrong ſtep* may be followed with a train of miſchievous conſequences. It is of importance that he begin well; that he ſet out right; that he early take the path in which he ſhould walk; that he be ſecured from the fatal tracks, into which incautious ſouls are eaſily decoyed. One falſe ſtep will make way for another, and that for a third, until the poor thoughtleſs wanderer will be ſo bewildered in the mazes of errour; ſo entangled in the ſnares of vice, that he will not know by what means to extricate himſelf, nor by what ſteps to return back to the good way, from which he has departed.

Speak to him, becauſe he may have many *bad adviſers*. His wicked companions will intice him to evil; and perhaps their fair ſpeeches will cauſe him to yield. Many ſeducing ſuggeſtions will be made to him; many flattering arguments will be urged upon him, to draw him away from truth and virtue. Give him your wholeſome cautions, that he may ceaſe to hear the inſtructions, which cauſe to err from the words of knowledge.

Speak to him, becauſe *the intereſt of his ſoul* is depending. It cannot be a matter of indifference what courſe he takes, for with this his eternal ſtate is connected. The path of ſin is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death. The path of righteouſneſs is the way of life, leading up to the kingdom of glory. As you would ſave a ſoul from death, apply the means in your power to convert the ſinner from the errour of his ways.

Speak to him, becauſe from your *ſilence* he will conclude that his way is *right*, or not dangerouſly wrong. There are many caſes, in which, not to reprove is to countenance an errour; not to condemn is to excuſe a fault; not to reſtrain is to embolden a tranſgreſſion.

Speak to him, becauſe the virtue and happineſs of *others* may greatly depend on *his* conduct. If he runs into the path of vice, you know not how many he may draw after him. Theſe again may decoy and miſlead many more. His pernicious influence may ſpread wide and laſt long. It may reach down to ſucceeding generations, and extend itſelf on each ſide, more and more, in its progreſs. One ſinner deſtroys much good. You know not, how much evil you may prevent, and how much good you may promote, by ſpeaking to one young man. By ſpeaking to him, you may ſpeak to hundreds.

Speak to him, becauſe he is *young*, and there is hope that you may do him good. There may be ſome older ſinners who are hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin, and become callous and unfeeling to reproof. The young are not yet ſo far gone in vice. There is in them ſome ſenſibility of heart; ſome regard to honour; ſome apprehenſion of futurity; ſome tenderneſs of conſcience; and a word properly ſpoken may have a happy effect.

You will next enquire, *whoſe buſineſs* is it to ſpeak to the young man?

It is the buſineſs of every one who ſees, that he needs to be ſpoken to, and who can do him good by ſpeaking. Particularly,

His *parents* ought to ſpeak to him. They are commanded to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; to train him up in the way in which he ſhould go. By divine authority they are charged with his inſtruction, guidance and education. If they forbear to execute the charge, how God will reſent the neglect, they may learn from the example of his vengeance on the houſe of Eli, of which he ſays, "I will judge the

houſe of Eli forever for the iniquity which he knoweth, becauſe his ſons made themſelves vile, and he reſtrained them not."

If the youth be removed from the government of his parents, *they*, under whoſe *care* he now lives, ſhould ſpeak to him. As he is become a member of their family, they are bound, as they ſee occaſion, to adviſe and reprove him. Every head of a family has authority within his own houſe; and he can, if he will, maintain order and government there. Let his example be pure and blameleſs, and his inſtructions and reproofs will be powerful and efficacious. If there be thoſe in his family, who, by reaſon of age, are beyond the reach of his authority; or, by reaſon of perverſeneſs, ſpurn the orders of his houſe, he can, at leaſt, remove them. Let every houſeholder adopt David's reſolution, "I will behave myſelf wiſely in a perfect way: I will walk within my houſe with a perfect heart: I will ſet no wicked thing before my eyes. A froward heart ſhall depart from me: I will not know a wicked perſon. Mine eyes ſhall be on the faithful, that they may dwell with me. He that worketh deceit ſhall not dwell in my houſe; he that telleth lies ſhall not tarry in my ſight."

Miniſters ought to ſpeak to him. Chriſt has given it in command to them to feed his lambs. It is a part of Paul's charge to Titus, "Exhort young men to be ſober minded." John wrote to little children and to young men, "that the word of God might dwell in them, and that they might be ſtrong to overcome the wicked one." Miniſters are to regard the weak as well as the ſtrong, and children as well as thoſe who are of full age. They are to give every one his portion, and to diſtribute in Chriſt's family both milk and ſtrong meat.

Aged people ſhould ſpeak to him. Their years, gravity and experience, if accompanied with right-couſneſs, give dignity to their perſons, weight to their counſels, and authority to their reproofs. On the contrary, their ſilence and connivance will embolden the youthful tranſgreſſor, and ſtrengthen his hands, that he will not depart from iniquity. Paul ſays to Titus, "Speak thou the things which become ſound doctrine, that the aged men be ſober, grave, temperate, ſound in faith, charity and patience: The aged women likewiſe, that they be in behaviour as becometh holineſs, that they may teach the young to be ſober, diſcreet and good."

Youths ought to ſpeak often among *themſelves*; to reprove, admoniſh, and encourage one another, as there is occaſion; to exhort one another daily, leſt any be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin, and to be fellow helpers to the truth.

If youth, in general, were diſpoſed to teſtify againſt the wicked practices of their aſſociates, they would ſoon diſcourage them. Many are emboldened in their wickedneſs, becauſe they meet with ſome who treat it with a kind of jocular and mirthful approbation. Now if you would frown upon it, expreſs your abhorrence of it, and ſhow that you cannot bear them who are evil, the guilty would be aſhamed of themſelves. The advice which the apoſtle gives to Chriſtians concerning their treatment of a diſorderly brother, is fit to be obſerved by you in your conduct toward a diſorderly companion. "Note ſuch an one, and have no company with him, that he may be aſhamed: yet count him not as an enemy, but admoniſh him as a brother."

You will now aſk, in what *manner* muſt we ſpeak to him that is young?

Speak to him *ſpeedily*. Delays in important matters are attended with great danger. If you think of any thing neceſſary to be ſpoken to him, take the firſt good opportunity to ſpeak it. You may not have another. *You* or *he* may ſoon be dead.

Speak to him *early*, before he has gone to an irreclaimable length in an evil courſe. "Whom ſhall he teach knowledge?" ſays the prophet, "Whom ſhall he make to underſtand doctrine? Them who are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breaſt."

Speak to him *ſeaſonably*, when you find him in a proper frame to hear you; when his paſſions are calm, his thoughts compoſed, and his mind open to inſtruction.

Speak to him *frequently*; for "precept muſt be upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little." The Jewiſh parent was commanded to "talk with his children, when he ſat in the houſe, and when he walked by the way; when he lay down, and when he aroſe."

Speak to him *pertinently*; for "a word fitly ſpoken is like apples of gold in pictures of ſilver." If you ſee him ignorant, enlighten him; if you ſee him raſh and preſumptuous, check and caution him; if you ſee him careleſs, awake him; if you ſee him inattentive to danger, warn him; if you ſee him engaged in wickedneſs, reprove and reſtrain him; if you ſee him turning to the path of virtue, encourage and ſtrengthen him.

Speak to him *plainly*, but *tenderly*. Chooſe out forceable, but acceptable words; ſuch as may reach the heart without irritating the paſſions. "As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold; ſo is a wiſe reprover on an obedient ear." "Ye pa-

rents, provoke not your children to wrath, leſt they be diſcouraged."

Speak to him *ſeriouſly*; that he may ſee, you are not trifling, but in earneſt; are not influenced by paſſion or ill humour, but by a regard to his intereſt, and a ſenſe of the importance of what you ſay. The ſeriouſneſs of your addreſs will, we hope, command his attention.

In this manner you muſt ſpeak to the young man.

Well; and what ſhall we ſay to him?

Tell him that he has a GOD to ſerve.

The voice of nature proclaims the exiſtence of a Deity: We ſee innumerable objects around us, which evidently could not bring themſelves into being, but muſt owe their exiſtence to ſome firſt cauſe. He who is the firſt cauſe of all things, muſt be eternal, infinite and independent. And ſuch a Being muſt poſſeſs every perfection; wiſdom, power, juſtice, goodneſs; and whatever is neceſſary to conſtitute a perfect character. Yea, the works which we behold demonſtrate theſe perfections in their Author. "The inviſible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead." The belief of the exiſtence and providence of a God is the firſt principle of religion. "He that cometh to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him." Lead the youth, then, to an early acquaintance with the Creator. Direct his thoughts to the moſt eaſy and obvious proofs of the divine perfections and government. Teach him to view his maker as always with him, ſupporting his nature, inſpecting his actions, attending to his words and obſerving his thoughts. Teach him to conſider God as a hater

of ſin and a lover of righteouſneſs. Teach him to regard every bleſſing as the gift of God's bounty, and every affliction as the correction of his hand, and to direct his heart to God in grateful acknowledgements of the former, and humble ſubmiſſion to the latter. Teach him that he is accountable to God for all that he thinks, ſpeaks and does, and that a view to the divine approbation ſhould govern all his conduct.

Tell him that he has a *ſoul* to ſave; that the power within him, which thinks and reaſons, loves and hates, rejoices and grieves, is ſpiritual and immortal; dies not with the body, but ſurvives its diſſolution, and will live in another world; that he was not made merely to eat and drink, ſport and play for a while in this world, and then to die like the brutes; but to ſerve God in his ſpirit here, and prepare for an eternal enjoyment of him hereafter; that, therefore, it muſt not be his principal care to adorn and feed the body, but to improve and cultivate the mind; to furniſh it with knowledge, ſtore it with virtuous principles, and enrich it with noble ſentiments; to ſubdue the paſſions, reſtrain the ſenſual propenſities, enlarge the underſtanding, and become like to God in purity, truth and goodneſs. Remind him of the *evidences* of his immortality. Teach him to conſider his natural deſire of life, as an intimation that there is a life beyond this; and the powers of reaſon and reflection as marks of his ſuperiority to the brutes, and proofs that he was deſigned for a nobler purpoſe, than they. Teach him, that as God is a holy and righteous being, he will make a difference between the virtuous and the wicked; and ſince good men often ſuffer, and bad men often proſper in this world, there muſt be another

world, in which this difference will be made. Direct his mind to those plainer evidences of a future state, which he may find in the holy scriptures; not only in the declarations which they contain, but also in the facts which they record relative to Jesus Christ, who died, rose and ascended, and now lives in glory.

Tell him, that he is a *fallen creature*. And that he may be apprized of the sinful inclinations and corrupt tendencies of his heart, lead him to compare himself with the divine law in its purity and perfection. Tell him how sin entered into our nature, and death into our world; even by the revolt of the first parent of our race. Instruct him in the strictness of the divine law, which condemns, and must in its nature condemn every transgression of, or deviation from its own commands. Hence lead him to see, that by the deeds of the law no man can be justified before God, or claim a reward at his hands; but, on the contrary, every soul, considered in himself, and in relation only to the law, lies under guilt and condemnation.

Tell him, that there is a *Saviour* provided for sinners; who this Saviour is and what he has done. Teach him, that God, in his boundless compassion to fallen men, sent down from heaven his divine son, who, being manifested in our flesh, obeyed the precepts and suffered the penalty of the law for us; wrought wonders to prove his heavenly mission; marked the way to heaven by his doctrines; exemplified in his own life that manner of life which he has injoined on us; and, after his death on the cross, rose again and gave many infallible proofs of the reality of his resurrection, then ascended to heaven to prepare a place for us, and there lives to make intercession for them who come to God by him. Teach him, that, through the righteousness and intercession of this Saviour, the

greateſt ſinners may obtain the pardon of ſin, and the life to come.

Tell him *what he muſt do* to be ſaved; that he muſt believe on the Lord Jesus Chriſt, the Saviour whom God has ſent; that ſaving faith in Chriſt is nothing leſs than a hearty conſent to, and compliance with his goſpel; that it includes a perſuaſion of his divine miſſion, a love of his heavenly doctrines, a ſubmiſſion to his holy precepts, a conformity to his excellent example, a repentance of known ſin, and a reſolution and care to walk in newneſs of life; that this faith purifies the heart, works by love, and forms a new creature; that conſequently no man can juſtly pretend to be a believer in Chriſt, as long as he indulges a temper, and leads a life oppoſite to the goſpel of Chriſt; that true faith is only *that*, which is accompanied with repentance from dead works, and a life devoted to the ſervice of God.

Tell him, that faith is *the gift of God;* a fruit of divine opperation; a conſequence of God's opening the heart. This is the doctrine of ſcripture. In the ſinful and corrupt nature of fallen man there is an oppoſition to the ſpiritual and holy deſign of the goſpel. This oppoſition muſt be conquered; this enmity muſt be ſubdued; pride muſt be brought down; the ſtupid heart muſt be awakened; prejudices againſt the truth muſt be removed. How ſhall the word produce theſe great effects? It muſt come as a ſword in the hand of the ſpirit. It muſt come with demonſtration of the ſpirit and with power. It is mighty only through God. Therefore allow not your young man to indulge the vain ſelf-flattery, that believing to his own ſalvation is no more than what he may do at any time, when he may ſee occaſion; and hence be led to imagine, that an early attention to his

ſalvation is needleſs; but put him in remembrance that, ſince faith is the gift of God and a fruit of the ſpirit, and ſince the ſpirit's moſt uſual time to work is the period of youth, it highly concerns him to liſten to the calls of grace, comply with the motions of the ſpirit, and engage in the work of his ſalvation now in this peculiarly acceptable time, leſt being hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin, and through an evil heart of unbelief, he depart from the living God.

Tell him how he muſt ſeek the gift of divine grace. Since faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, he muſt frequently read, diligently hear, and carefully examine this word; attend to the evidences of its truth and the importance of its contents; conſider his own immediate concern in its diſcoveries; pray for divine direction and illumination; guard againſt the temptations which would harden him in the practice of his ſins and divert him from the care of his ſoul. Caution him againſt evil company, dangerous amuſements, and the follies, vanities and luſts which are eſpecially incident to his age. Inſtruct him to ſeek the favour of his maker immediately, earneſtly, conſtantly and perſeveringly, and yet to ſeek it humbly, and with a ſenſe of his unworthineſs.

Tell him of the *ſins* which, you ſee, moſt eaſily beſet him, and from which, you apprehend, his greateſt danger ariſes; warn him to avoid them; furniſh him with arguments againſt them; repreſent to him the deſtructive influence they will have on his reputation, comfort, intereſt, and eſpecially on his ſoul; ſhow him, how they harden the heart, waſte the conſcience, grieve the ſpirit, defeat the word, diſhonor God, provoke his wrath, and terminate in miſery. Point out to

him the baleful influence of his evil communication and example to corrupt the hearts, viciate the morals, and ruin the ſouls of others ; hold up to his view the awful judgment of God againſt thoſe who corrupt the earth with their abominations. The ſmoke of their torment will aſcend forever and ever ; and the ſaints will give glory to God for his righteous judgment.

Tell him of his *duty* in its various branches ; the duty of fear, truſt, reſignation and obedience which he owes to God ; of faith, gratitude and love which he owes to the redeemer ; of benevolence, truth, juſtice, condeſcenſion and peaceableneſs, which he owes to mankind ; of ſobriety, charity, temperance and humility, which he owes to himſelf. Repreſent to him the beauty, amiableneſs and importance of theſe virtues. Whatſoever things are true, juſt, pure, honeſt, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praiſeworthy, bid him think on theſe things.

Tell him that he muſt *die*. He is apt to put away the thoughts of death. Urge him to conſider, that death is as certainly appointed for him, as it was for his anceſtors, who are already gone to the grave ; that, though he is now in the bloom of youth and vigour of health, he is no more ſure of life, than his grandſire who ſtoops with age and bends on his ſtaff—apply for his awakening the deaths of others, and eſpecially the deaths of the young—preſs upon him the wiſe man's exhortation, " Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work in the grave, whither thou goeſt."

Finally. Tell him of an approaching *judgment*, at which both ſmall and great muſt ſtand before God. Remind him that God will judge the ſecrets of all hearts—will diſcloſe the hidden things

of darkneſs—will try every man's work of what ſort it is—will render to all according to their deeds whether good or evil—to them, who by patient continuance in well doing have ſought for glory, honour and immortality ; eternal life : but to them who have not obeyed the truth, but have obeyed unrighteouſneſs ; indignation and wrath. If you ſee him, in contempt of all your warnings, ſtill reſolved to walk in his own ways, and in the ſight of his own eyes, bid him remember, that for all theſe things God will bring him into judgment.

Theſe are the ſubjects on which you ſhould talk to the young, and to which you ſhould often call their attention.

And now, that I may diſcharge a part of my own duty, I turn myſelf to the young. You have ſeen that it is the duty of parents, miniſters, the aged, and all who regard your happineſs, often to ſpeak to you. And ſurely, if it is our duty to ſpeak, it is yours to hear us, when we ſpeak. If you will not hear, we may as well be ſilent. We ſhall, indeed, thus deliver our own ſouls ; but we ſhall aggravate the deſtruction of yours. Therefore hear inſtruction, be wiſe and refuſe it not. Be of a teachable diſpoſition. Receive our commandments humbly ; take our reproofs thankfully ; regard our counſels ſeriouſly ; if you doubt their propriety, examine them honeſtly, and propoſe your objections modeſtly ; if you find them to be juſt and pertinent, follow them conſcientiouſly. Conſider, weigh and apply the things which have been ſpoken in your hearing.

There is a God, who made and preſerves you : fear and love him with all your hearts ; honour and obey him in all your ways. You have immortal ſouls, which muſt live, and be happy or

miſerable, in a future world: make your ſouls your firſt care. You are fallen creatures, tranſgreſſors of God's law, and as ſuch you are expoſed to the wrath of God: awake to a ſenſe of your danger; flee from the wrath to come. A Redeemer has appeared, died and riſen, that he may deliver you from that wrath, and bring you to glory and happineſs in heaven—Flee for refuge to him, and lay hold on the hope which he has ſet before you.

That you may obtain ſalvation through him, commit yourſelves to him by faith; renounce ſin by repentance; ſeek the grace of the ſpirit by prayer and attendance on all appointed means; watch againſt ſin and againſt the temptations which await you; be not conformed to the world, but prove what is the acceptable will of God; be not weary in well doing, for in due ſeaſon you will reap, if you faint not. That you may be quickened in your duty and in the work of your ſalvation, think much on death and the judgment to come. "Hear the concluſion of the whole matter; Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

SERMON III.

Youth invited to the Lord's Supper.

EXODUS xii, 26, 27.

And it ſhall come to paſs, when your children ſhall ſay unto you, What mean you by this ſervice? that ye ſhall ſay, It is the ſacrifice of the Lord's paſſover, who paſſed over the houſes of the children of Iſrael in Egypt, when he ſmote the Egyptians, and delivered our houſes.

WHEN God ſelected the ſeed of Abraham for a people to himſelf, he preſcribed to them the form of worſhip, which he would accept. Among the various ordinances which he inſtituted, a principal one was that of the *paſſover*. The inſtitution, occaſion and deſign of this ordinance are related in the chapter where our text is.

The great Jehovah was now about to deliver his choſen people from their long and grievous oppreſſions in Egypt. This deliverance he determined to effect in a manner which ſhould demonſtrate his power and ſupremacy in diſtinction from the pagan divinities. To perpetuate the remembrance of this great ſalvation, he inſtituted the paſſover, to be obſerved by the Iſraelites on that ſolemn night, when he ſent forth his angel to deſtroy all the firſt-born in the Egyptian houſes, and thus ſubdued the ſtubborn ſpirit of the Egyptian king, to diſmiſs this afflicted people.

The inſtructions concerning the feſtival were theſe. On the tenth day of the month *Niſan*, which anſwered in part to our *March*, and was thence forward to be the firſt month of their eccleſiaſtical year, every family of Iſrael, or, if one family was too ſmall, two neighbouring families joining together, were to take a male lamb of the firſt year, without blemiſh, and ſhut it up until the fourteenth day, and then ſlay it in the evening. In the blood of the lamb they were to dip a bunch of hyſſop, and ſprinkle with it the doors of every houſe where the lamb was eaten, and to continue in the houſe until the morning. This was the condition of their exemption from the judgment, which, in that night, was to fall on the Egyptians. This lamb was to be dreſſed whole; not a bone of it was to be broken; it was to be roaſted with fire, and eaten all at once, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; and if any part was left, it was to be burnt with fire; and they were to eat it in the poſture and habit of pilgrims, with their girdles around their loins, their ſhoes on their feet, and their ſtaves in their hands.

After the Jews were ſettled in the land of promiſe, ſome of theſe circumſtances were omitted, and others were added. The firſt paſſover was celebrated in their own houſes: after the order of divine worſhip was ſettled, all the males were to appear before God in Jeruſalem. The firſt paſſover was eaten in a ſtanding poſture: but it appears, by our Saviour's example, that it was afterward eaten in the more eaſy poſture of gueſts ſitting around a table. In the firſt inſtitution there is no mention made of the uſe of wine: but this in future time was added to the ſolemnity. To this there are ſome alluſions in the book of Pſalms;

and there is expreſs mention of it in our Lord's celebration of the feſtival.

To commemorate the deliverance of the Iſraelites from Egypt was the primary deſign of the paſſover, and to this deſign the circumſtances of the feſtival were pertinently adapted. The ſacrifice was a lamb without blemiſh to ſignify their obligation to innocence and holineſs of life. It was ſet apart from the reſt of the flock, to denote that they were a peculiar people unto God. As the moſt expeditious manner of preparation, it was roaſted with fire, to ſignify that they were to hold themſelves in readineſs for an immediate departure. The whole was eaten by them, or conſumed with fire, that no part of it might be profaned by the Egyptians. It was eaten in the poſture of travellers, to indicate their expectation of orders to begin their march. It was ſeaſoned with bitter herbs, in memory of their cruel bondage and in thankfulneſs for their deliverance. The bread eaten with it was made without leaven, in recognition of their ſudden emigration, which allowed them no time for the uſual method of preparing their bread.

This feſtival, however, had a farther and more important deſign, which was to lead the thoughts of the Jews to Jeſus Chriſt, and to the great redemption effected by his death. Hence the apoſtles call him *our paſſover*—the *lamb* of God—a lamb *ſlain* from the *foundation of the world*—a lamb *without blemiſh and without ſpot*. The order, that not a bone of the paſchal lamb ſhould be broken, is ſaid to have been fulfilled in Chriſt, whoſe bones, contrary to the common uſage, were left unbroken at his crucifixion. His *blood* is called the blood of *ſprinkling* in alluſion to the ſprinkling of the blood of the paſſover. And Chriſtians are directed to

keep the goſpel feaſt, with the *unleavened bread* of ſincerity and truth.

The Jewiſh paſſover, then, was an ordinance of much the ſame nature and deſign as the Chriſtian ſupper. The former had the ſame intention with reſpect to the Jews, as the latter has with reſpect to Chriſtians, which is to lead their minds to the Saviour. The chief difference is, that the paſſover prefigured his future death; the ſupper commemorates his death already paſt. *This* was inſtituted at the time when *that* was aboliſhed, and doubtleſs ſucceeded in its place.

Our divine Lord, knowing, that the time of his death was at hand, ſaid to his diſciples, "With deſire I have deſired to eat this paſſover with you before I ſuffer." As it was the laſt paſſover which he ſhould ever ſee on earth, and the laſt that ever ought to be celebrated, he felt a peculiar ſolicitude to attend it with his diſciples; and his deſire probably was increaſed by the conſideration, that this would be a favorable opportunity to inſtitute his commemorative ſupper.

At the ſtated ſeaſon for the celebration of the paſſover, he foreſaw, that he ſhould be in the hands of his enemies; he therefore ſolemnized it the day before. And as ſoon as he and his diſciples had done eating of the *paſchal* ſupper, he inſtituted his *own*. He took ſome of the bread which was on the table, and, having conſecrated it by prayer, brake it and gave it to his diſciples. And then he took ſome of the wine prepared for the paſſover, and, in like manner, bleſſed that, and diſtributed it among them. On this occaſion, he inſtructed them, that the bread and the wine were ſymbols of his body broken, and of his blood poured forth to procure pardon for ſinners, and to ratify the promiſes of the covenant. And

he required them to attend upon this ordinance, not in remembrance of the redemption from Egypt, of which the paſſover was a memorial, but in remembrance of a more glorious redemption ſoon to be accompliſhed by his own death. He adds, "I will not henceforth drink of the fruit of the vine until the day, when I drink it new with you in my father's kingdom." The ſame he had ſaid juſt before concerning the cup in the paſſover. And his meaning was, that he ſhould not any more partake of either of theſe ordinances perſonally: but he ſhould rejoice to behold the things ſignified by them happily accompliſhed under his new diſpenſation, which was now about to be introduced.

From theſe obſervations it is manifeſt, that the ſacramental ſupper is appointed to ſucceed the paſſover; that both have reſpect to the Saviour, and to the benefits procured by his death; and that the ſupper in the Chriſtian church has much the ſame uſe, as the paſſover had in the Jewiſh church. The inſtructions therefore relative to the paſſover may, in many reſpects, be applied to the Chriſtian inſtitution.

We will particularly attend to the inſtructions contained in the paſſage ſelected for our text.

I. The paſchal inſtitution reſpected the *whole congregation*. "Ye ſhall obſerve this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy ſons forever—and when ye ſhall come into the land, which the Lord ſhall give you, ye ſhall keep this ſervice."

There were ſome ceremonial pollutions, which diſqualified a Jew for an *immediate* attendance on this ſolemnity; but his *general* obligation to obſerve it, nothing could cancel; for this was founded in divine authority. The ſacred nature of the ordinance required all to make ſuitable *pre-*

paration for it, that they might attend upon it acceptably; but the neceſſity of preparation was never a juſt cauſe for *cuſtomary* neglect. In the time of Hezekiah, many who had not opportunity to obſerve the uſual forms of purification, ventured to eat of the paſſover otherwiſe than it was written; but Hezekiah prayed for them, ſaying, "The good Lord pardon every one who prepareth his heart to ſeek unto God, though he be not cleanſed according to the purification of the ſanctuary." The external form was of uſe only as a mean of preparing the heart, which was the main thing neceſſary to an acceptable attendance.

This obſervation may be applied to the ſupper. The obligation to attend upon it is common to all Chriſtians. The command of Chriſt, "Do this in remembrance of me," was indeed firſt given to the twelve. But Saint Paul tells us, that it reſpected all Chriſtians, in all ages, down to the time of Chriſt's ſecond coming. No man, who believes the goſpel, can claim a right to live in diſobedience to this, more than to every divine command.

There are indeed, certain moral diſqualifications for an acceptable attendance on the ſupper. But whatever they be, we muſt remove them, that we may attend on the ordinance; not plead them in excuſe for neglecting the ordinance. We ought not to come to it with impenitent, unbelieving hearts, or with malevolent, unſocial paſſions. What then?—Are we to turn from it?—No: we are to make preparation for it by examining ourſelves, by repenting of our ſins, by repairing injuries, by ſeeking reconciliation with offended brethren, and by cultivating benevolence toward all men. Whether we come to the ordinance or not, we can have no right to indulge a wicked

temper either toward God or men. And one uſe of the ordinance is, to make us watchful againſt ſuch a temper; and to awaken us to repentance, when we diſcover this temper in us, or perceive it ſtealing upon us.

II. Our text teaches us, that, as the ancient paſſover, ſo alſo the Lord's ſupper, was particularly deſigned for the benefit of the young. "When your *children* ſhall ſay, What mean you by this ſervice? then ſhall ye ſay, It is the ſacrifice of the Lord's paſſover."

One uſe of the paſſover was to excite the attention and enquiry of *children*, that they might thus be prepared to receive inſtruction from their parents concerning the great things, which God had done, and ſtill would do for his people. The publick celebration of this feſtival, from year to year, was deſigned to be the means of tranſmitting the knowledge of religion from one generation to another down to the lateſt period of that diſpenſation.

In times of national degeneracy, this ordinance fell into diſuſe. But whenever there was a revival of religion, the reſtoration of the feſtival and a regular attendance upon it were ſome of the firſt favourable appearances. Thus it was in the reigns of Hezekiah and Joſiah, thoſe pious kings, whoſe reigns were diſtinguiſhed by an active zeal for religion.

It was common for the *young* to attend the paſſover. They were conducted thither by their parents, that they might obſerve the ſolemnity and learn the deſign of it. Luke tells us, it was the cuſtom for children to repair to this feſtival, as ſoon as they were twelve years old. It was at the time of the paſſover, that children in the temple ſung, "Hoſanna to the ſon of David." Jeſus was pleaſed with the pious ſtrain.

Now as the Lord's ſupper is an inſtitution parallel to, and ſucceeding in the place of the paſſover, we may conclude, that this, as well as the other, was deſigned for the uſe and benefit of the young; and that they are under ſome ſpecial obligation to attend upon it. One obvious uſe of it is to awaken in their minds religious thoughtfulneſs, and to draw from them pertinent enquiries, that the parent may thus be led to inſtruct them in the great redemption purchaſed for a guilty world by the death of Jeſus Chriſt, whoſe death is repreſented in this ordinance.

The young ſeem generally to imagine, that the ordinance was not intended for perſons of their age. That their fathers ought to obſerve it, they have no doubt; but for themſelves they think it is a matter of little concern. In moſt churches the number of communicating youths is very ſmall. Few approach the table of their redeemer, until they become ſettled in a family ſtate: and there are many, who even then neglect it. But let me tell you, my young hearers, that as ſoon as you are able to diſcern the Lord's body in the holy ſupper, and to underſtand what is meant by this ſervice, you, as well as others, are bound to attend upon it. We find, that, in the time of the apoſtles, there were in the church little children, as well as young men and fathers.

You will perhaps ſay, "We have not ſufficient knowledge."

Then ſeek knowledge. Content not yourſelves with what you have attained; but endeavour to abound more and more. You have been taught, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners. Surely you ſhould be ſolicitous to know, who this ſaviour is—what he has done and ſuffered for you—and what you muſt do to be ſaved.

If you have this knowledge, and with it a desire to obtain, and a resolution to seek salvation through Jesus Christ, you have such preparation, as will warrant your approach to his table.

You will say, "We are afraid, we shall not live so as to honour the religion of Christ."

Be then so much the more watchful over yourselves, prayerful to God, and diligent in your attendance on all the instituted means of piety.

Doubtless you have cause to fear, lest you dishonour your Saviour by a conversation which his gospel forbids. But is this a reason why you should not confess his name?—Why you should not even resolve, or promise, or endeavour to honour him? No: It is a reason, why you should be more careful what manner of persons you are.

Perhaps some will say, "Our past conversation has not been such as becomes the gospel of Christ."

Is this an excuse for neglecting a plain institution—an institution designed especially for *you?*—No: It is high time for you to repent and walk in newness of life. Let not sin reign in you, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof; but yield yourselves to Christ as those who are alive from the dead, and your members instruments of righteousness to him.

You will say, "We do not know that we are in a converted state." Give diligence then to make your calling sure; and, with this view, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue, knowledge. But, in the mean time, neglect none of the commands of God. It is not by the neglect, but by the practice of duty, that you are to prove the reality of your conversion.

The apostles exhorted sinners to repent and turn to God: but they never advised the serious and enquiring to delay their entrance into the

church, until they had proved the ſincerity of their repentance by doing works meet for repentance. When Peter's hearers, pricked in their hearts, enquired, what they muſt do to be ſaved; he ſaid to them, "Repent and be baptiſed for the remiſſion of ſins, for the promiſe is to you." And they gladly received the word; and the ſame day, were added to the church three thouſand ſouls. The apoſtle could not know, nor could they themſelves know, without longer time of trial, that they were ſavingly changed; but he, the ſame day, admitted them into the church, without intimating the expedience of farther delay.

You will ſay, "The man found at the marriage feaſt, without a wedding garment, fell under a ſevere puniſhment." It is true; and ſo did they, who refuſed to come to the feaſt at all. What then ſhall we do? Let us come to the feaſt, and put on the wedding garment. This gueſt, with many others, was called into the king's houſe out of the highway. Where ſhould he get a wedding garment: he had none of his own; and his fellow beggars had none to give him. At the king's houſe, there was clean raiment, as well as rich food. Here both were free; and here the beggar muſt come for both. His fault was not, that he *came* to the feaſt, for he was commanded to come; but that he ſat there in his *dirt* and *rags*, and would not put on the clean garments brought him from the king's wardrobe.

Your coming into the church, and attending on inſtituted ordinances, will not be your condemnation; theſe things are required of you: but if, under all your advantages, you continue in the love and practice of ſin, *this* will be your condemnation. It is not your obſervance, but

your misimprovement of divine institutions, which involves you in guilt.

"But ought we to come into the church, and approach Christ's table, while we know, that we have no regard to religion?" If this is your character, you neither ask the question, nor desire an answer, on a religious account. You cannot feel a conscientious solicitude about your duty in this matter, when you have no regard to it in any thing else. It is time for you to awake out of sleep, to repent of your sins, and seek God's mercy and grace, for the renewal of your souls and the remission of your guilt. When any ask me, what is their duty in a particular case, I suppose them to be serious, and I answer them accordingly. If they have no desire to know or intention to do their duty, their question is trifling, and the answer will be impertinent. If you are regardless of religion, I can only exhort you to consider your ways, and think on your danger, that you may be awakened to juster sentiments. But if you already believe the gospel to be true, and feel it to be important; if you have a concern to secure its blessings, and a resolution to obey its precepts, then go, and attend on all the means which God has appointed to confirm your hopeful beginnings, and accomplish your good intentions.

"But we are anxious to obtain grace for our conversion: and some tell us, that, if once we venture to the Lord's table before we are converted, there is little hope, that we can ever be converted afterward." My children, they tell you wrong. Paul was of a different opinion. The churches in Galatia, formed by his ministry, soon turned unto another gospel, than that which he had preached to them; and he was afraid, that he had bestowed on them labour in vain. But he travailed in

birth for them again, that Chriſt might be formed in them. Reſt not in ordinances as your ſecurity; make them not a ſubſtitute for holineſs; but improve them as the means of holineſs. Goſpel ſinners will be ſhut out of Chriſt's kingdom, not becauſe they have eaten and drunk in his preſence, and heard him teach in their ſtreets, but becauſe they have ſtill been workers of iniquity.

But does not the apoſtle ſay, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf?" Yes: This man brings guilt, or judgment on himſelf, becauſe he diſcerns not the Lord's body. So did the Corinthians, who took one before another his own ſupper, and one was hungry and another was drunken; and ſo do all who eat in a profane and impious manner. It is not in this manner, that I adviſe you to eat. But examine yourſelves, and ſo eat of this bread and drink of this cup. The apoſtle does not warn theſe diſorderly partakers to partake no more, but exhorts them to repentance of what is paſt, and amendment for the time to come.

If Jeſus has appointed this ordinance eſpecially for your benefit, there is a peculiar ingratitude attending your neglect of it. The Redeemer, in his whole work, ſeems to have had a particular and diſtinct regard to the young. He himſelf became a child, that he might exhibit to children an example of early piety; and one branch of piety, which he early exemplified, was an attendance on divine ordinances. At the age of twelve years we find him at the paſſover. He has invited the young to come to him; he has expreſſed his high approbation of youthful religion: never did he appear better pleaſed, than when he met children in the temple at the paſſover, and heard them ſing, "Hoſanna to the ſon of David." He

has cautioned his disciples, that they offend not his little ones, nor cast stumbling blocks in their way. He has represented them as under the guardianship of angels. In the view of the general destruction of Jerusalem, the distresses which would come on children, affected him with such deep sensibility, that he almost forgat his own. While he was going to the place of execution he said to the sadly sympathizing women, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." He has given it in solemn charge to the pastors of his flock, that they pay particular attention to his lambs.

What think you of all this, my children? Are you not bound to come to this ordinance?—an ordinance which Jesus has appointed for you, and in which he exhibits himself as dying for you—dying to purchase a salvation, which you need—and need no less than others? Do you not think, that he will be pleased with your attendance at his table, as well as with the songs of the youths in his ancient temple? Do you not think, that this Saviour, who in the days of his flesh was so attentive to the young, and so delighted with early indications of piety, will accept your pious and humble approaches to his ordinances?

There are some who, in their tender age, have felt their minds impressed with a sense of religion, and have thought, that they soon would openly dedicate themselves to their Saviour, and come to his table. But by delay their serious thoughts and resolutions have languished and died away. Ah! I have known such instances. Are there not now among you some of this description? What think you of these early impressions? Were they not the kind invitations of your Saviour to come and take a place in his family, and eat at his table?

Did he not ſtand at your door and knock? Was not this his call to you? "Hear my voice and open the door, and I will come in and ſup with you, and you ſhall ſup with me? What a pity, that you did not attend? What an advantage you might have gained by complying with his firſt call? Accept his invitation now. It is not yet too late. Hear his voice while it is called to day. It is ſtill a day of ſalvation.

How beautiful is the church in which our ſons are as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters as corner ſtones, poliſhed after the ſimilitude of a palace? How pleaſing the proſpect, when we ſee children devoting themſelves to God taking hold of his covenant, and youths walking in his ways and encouraging one another in his ſervice? We then anticipate the virtue and felicity of many generations, and promiſe ourſelves, that we ſhall ſee the good of Jeruſalem all the days of our life, and that our children's children will ſee the church in peace.

III. We may farther obſerve, that we ought to attend upon divine ordinances with a rational view of, and a ſerious regard to their proper uſe and deſign.

Moſes ſays, "When your children ſhall aſk, what mean you by this ſervice? ye ſhall ſay, It is the ſacrifice of the Lord's paſſover, who paſſed over the houſe of the Iſraelites in Egypt, when he ſmote the Egyptians."

Moſes here ſuppoſes it to be agreeable to the common ſenſe of mankind, and even to the early ideas of children, that there is ſome meaning in every ſervice which we perform to the deity. God never requires of us any uſeleſs and unmeaning ceremony. In our attendance on his inſtituted ſervice, we ſhould well underſtand what it means.

All positive institutions are intended for the promotion of real holiness; and our observance of them is no farther acceptable, than they are made subservient to this end.

The ordinance of the supper is designed to shew forth Christ's death; and to call up in our souls the devout remembrance of him. We are, therefore, to attend upon it with a pious regard to him—with a sense of our guilt and unworthiness—with repentance of, and resolutions against every known sin—with faith in his righteousness to justify us, and in his grace to sanctify us—with gratitude for his condescension and kindness in giving himself for us—with love to the brethren, and benevolence to all men, to which we are called by his example exhibited to us, and recognized by us in this ordinance. As we eat at the same table and partake of the same bread, we are to consider ourselves as members of the same family, and to study the things by which we may edify one another. The apostle says, "The cup of blessing is the communion," or joint participation "of his blood; and the bread which we break is the communion of his body; for we being many are one bread and one body, as we are all partakers of one bread;" or of the same loaf. "The things which the gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; nor be partakers of the table of the Lord and the table of devils."——"Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God; giving no offence, even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

I would observe once more,

4. It is incumbent on parents to inſtruct their children in the nature and deſign of God's ordinances, and to encourage their attendance upon them. "When your children ſhall enquire, What mean you by this ſervice, then ſhall ye ſay, It is the ſacrifice of the Lord's paſſover."

In like manner parents are to teach their children, what is meant by the Lord's ſupper. It is a ſymbol of his ſacrifice for the ſins of men.

There are ſome who deter their children from this ordinance by too awful repreſentations of it, as if it ſealed the guilt and deſtruction of thoſe who received it in unregeneracy. It would be more agreeable to the ſweet and benevolent ſpirit of the goſpel to repreſent the ordinance as a token of God's grace and mercy to ſinners, and as a mean of acceſs to him through the Redeemer. It was not inſtituted to perplex and enſnare, but to edify and comfort humble ſouls. It was not intended to terrify and affright, but to ſtrengthen and encourage the tender and fearful.

While we warn the young not to approach it with thoughtleſs temerity, or with the indulgence of known iniquity, let us invite them to come humbly and penitently. Let us lead them to view the ordinance, as deſigned no leſs for their uſe than for ours. Let us aſſiſt them in gaining a good knowledge of the goſpel, and exhort them to uſe this and every divine ordinance as the means of ſpiritual improvement. Let us recommend to them the religion of Jeſus by our own holy example. Let us ſmile on any hopeful diſpoſitions, which we diſcover in them, and contribute all in our power to their ſpiritual nouriſhment, that they may grow up in all things into Chriſt, and come to the ſtature of perfect men in him.

SERMON IV.

Early Piety the Comfort of Old Age.

A Sermon to Young People.

PSALM lxxi. 5.

For thou art my hope, O Lord God: Thou art my truſt from my youth.

MY young friends, I may venture to ſay, there is not one of you, but who wiſhes to live to old age. And if you deſire many days, certainly you deſire to ſee good in them all, even in the laſt of them. It is not a painful and diſconſolate, but a pleaſant and cheerful old age, which you deſire. I cannot promiſe you long life, continued health, or great riches; nor can I aſſure you, that your declining years will be free from bodily pains and worldly afflictions. But I can tell you, how old age, if you ſhould arrive to it, may be very comfortable; yea, more ſo than your youth. For inſtruction in this matter I will refer you to the experience of an aged man, whoſe words I juſt now read to you. They are the words of David; and words which he wrote, when he was

old and grey headed, and when he ſuffered great and ſore troubles. In this condition, and in this period of life, his chief comfort aroſe from a recollection of that courſe of humble piety, which commenced in early life. "Be thou my ſtrong habitation, to which I may continually reſort—for thou art my hope, O Lord; thou art my truſt from my youth." Imitate his example; and whatever may be your outward condition, you will experience his comforts.

"Truſt in God" ſuppoſes a full belief of his exiſtence, perfections and government. This belief is the firſt principle of all religion. "He that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them who diligently ſeek him."

It implies alſo a knowledge of thoſe gracious promiſes, which he has made to thoſe of *our* race and in *our* condition. A general knowledge of his *character* gives an aſſurance, that he will never *injure* us; but without a particular diſcovery of his kind intentions toward *us*, we can feel no aſſurance of *poſitive* good. For divine goodneſs is free; it is under no obligations, and ſubject to no demands; but is exerciſed under the direction of ſovereign wiſdom. And, beſure, fallen and guilty creatures, ſuch as *we* are, can ground their hope of future happineſs on nothing leſs than the promiſe of God, becauſe it is manifeſt that ſuch creatures deſerve puniſhment; and whether this puniſhment may, on any terms, be remitted, none can tell, without a declaration from God himſelf.

God's promiſes are conditional; and we become intereſted in the bleſſings promiſed only by a compliance with the conditions required. Truſt in God therefore implies a ſubmiſſion of heart, and a conformity of life to thoſe rules of duty, which he has preſcribed. We are required "to truſt in

God and do good"—"to commit ourſelves to him in well doing"—"to reſt in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." If we look for good, without applying the means to obtain it; if we expect the bounties of providence without diligence in our calling; preſervation from evil without circumſpection in our walk; the forgiveneſs of our ſins without repentance toward God; the preſence of God's grace without calling on his name; or the final ſalvation of our ſouls without a patient continuance in well doing; our pretended truſt in God is nothing better than preſumption, inſult and mockery.

David ſays, "Thou art my truſt from my *youth*." He profeſſes to have made religion his deliberate choice, the will of God the rule of his conduct, and hope in God the comfort of his ſoul, in that early period of life, which too often paſſes away in trifling and vanity.

David's hiſtory verifies his profeſſion. He was but a youth, when he went forth to the conflict with the giant of Gath, who bade defiance to the armies of the living God. The king of Iſrael judged him too young for ſuch an encounter. "Thou art not able," ſays he, "to fight with this Philiſtine, for thou art a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." But David was ſtrong in faith, and his faith he ſtrengthened by recurrence to paſt experience of God's merciful protection in times of danger. He anſwers the king, "Thy ſervant kept his father's ſheep in the wilderneſs; and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. And I went after him; and when he aroſe againſt me, I caught him by the beard and ſlew him. The Lord, who delivered me out of the paw of the lion and of the bear, ſhall deliver me out of the hand of this Philiſtine; and he ſhall be as one of thoſe."

As David *began* a life of piety in *youth*, ſo he *continued* it to *old age*. He ſays, "O God, thou art my truſt *from* my youth—Thou haſt taught me *from* my youth, and *hitherto* I have declared thy wonderous works." The religious knowledge, and the pious principles, which he had early embibed, governed his conduct in all the ſubſequent ſtages of his life.

In his hiſtory we find imperfections, and one inſtance of groſs and complicated iniquity; but not any habitual vice. His great tranſgreſſion was followed with a profeſſion of deep repentance—his imperfections were occaſions of godly ſorrow—his infirmities called up his daily vigilance. Repentance with him was not a tranſient exerciſe, but an habitual temper. Hence he prays, "Remember not againſt me the ſins of my youth; but according to thy mercy remember me for thy goodneſs ſake, O Lord."—"Who can underſtand his errors? Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults: keep back thy ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins; then ſhall I be innocent from the great tranſgreſſion." Conſcious of remaining corruptions, "he laid God's judgments before him, and watched to keep himſelf from his own iniquity"—from the ſin which moſt eaſily beſet him. Senſible of his liableneſs to err, "he thought on his ways;" and when he found himſelf going aſtray, he ſtopt, and "turned his feet into God s teſtimonies; and he made haſte and delayed not to keep the commandments of God." Diſtruſting his own wiſdom and ſtability, he held his ears attentive to reproof, and his mind open to conviction. "Let the righteous ſmite me," ſays he, "it ſhall be a kindneſs; and let him reprove me, it ſhall be an excellent oil, which ſhall not break my head."

When the prophet expoſtulated with him for his great tranſgreſſion, he diſcovered no reſentment at the freedom, which his monitor uſed with him; but humbly received, and honeſtly applied the rebuke, and penitently confeſſed, "I have ſinned againſt the Lord." David did this thing ſecretly, and might imagine, that it remained a ſecret ſtill. What inward exerciſes of penitence preceded the prophet's reproof, we cannot ſay. Now, for the firſt time, he was explicitly admoniſhed; now he found that his iniquity was no longer to be concealed; now he confeſſed his guilt, and declared his repentance before men.

In all his life he was diſtinguiſhed by a devout ſpirit; by a humble ſubmiſſion to divine corrections; by a wiſe improvement of various afflictions; by a conſtant obſervance of the ways of providence; by a faithful attendance on the worſhip of the ſanctuary; by a conſcientious performance of domeſtic duties; and by a thankful acknowledgment of mercies and deliverances. Few men appear to have walked through life in ſuch an intimate communion with God, and under ſuch an impreſſive ſenſe of God's preſence and government, as this good man, who, from his youth, had choſen God for his hope and truſt.

This early choice of religion was a ſpring of comfort to him in his declining years. In a time of affliction he prays, "Deliver me, O my God, for thou art my truſt from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from my childhood. My praiſe ſhall be continually of thee."

In David's example we are taught, "that early piety lays the ſureſt foundation for comfort in old age."

This is a truth, in which you, who are now young, are deeply concerned, and which you

ought moſt ſeriouſly to apply. You love many days, that you may ſee good. But how many ſoever your days may be, they will all paſs away, and the laſt of them will come. You cannot then ſee good, unleſs you now take up, and carry along with you, into that period, ſomething better than the world can give; for the world, however liberal it may ſeem for a while, will then take back all its former gifts.

The beſt thing, which you can then have to comfort and refreſh you, is the remembrance of early piety, and a conſciouſneſs of a patient continuance in well doing. If you wiſh to have this conſolation at that time, a pious life muſt be your choice now. This will, on many accounts, be your beſt ſupport.

1. Early religion will prevent many evils, which would be a torment in old age.

If you now are determined to caſt off the great concerns of religion, and to walk in your own ways, and in the ſight of your own eyes, be aſſured, that bitter things are written againſt you, and that your old age will ſadly poſſeſs the ſins of your youth in pains of body, remorſe of conſcience, and the terrors of wrath to come; or, which is worſe than all, in a ſtupidity of mind, which, though it may render you paſt feeling for a ſeaſon, will make your deſtruction more certain and more awful.

And beſides the evils which await *you*, there are miſchiefs incalculable and inconceivable, which you are bringing on *others*; and eſpecially on thoſe with whom you moſt frequently aſſociate. Many will be ſeduced into vice by your vain converſation—many will be corrupted in their manners by your ungodly example—many will be hardened in guilt by your profane contempt of re-

ligion. And these will be influential in seducing, corrupting and hardening many more. There is no possibility of foreseeing how long the evil may continue, how far it may run on, and how widely it may spread around, after it has once been put in motion. "One sinner destroys much good."

Now suppose you should live to old age, and in that solemn period should feel a serious sense of the judgment before you; will it not be painful to reflect on such a life as has been described? It will then be too late to recall the evils which you have done. They who commenced the journey of life in your company, will generally have finished their course, and passed to the judgment. The few who are left, will be placed at a distance from you. They will be out of the reach of your counsel and admoniton: or if you can speak to some of them, perhaps they will, by this time, have become too insensible to feel, and too obstinate to follow your good advice.

In this stage of life, you will probably see families, which sprang from you, and which, in consequence of your example, live, as you have done, without religion, without the fear of God, without regard to his worship. In a few days you must go to answer before God for your own personal conduct, and for the important trust committed to you. What answer will you be prepared to give? In the perplexity of conscious guilt, from what source will you derive comfort? God demands from you the service of your youth; if you will not give him this; behold, you have sinned against him; and be sure your sin will find you out.

2. Early piety will render you instruments of much good in the world. Your zeal and forwardness in religion will provoke very many. And,

in the time of old age, will it not be a pleaſing reflection, that you have not lived in vain; but, according to your ability, have brought honor to God's name, and done good to mankind? That by your youthful example you have encouraged ſome of your fellow youths to forſake the fooliſh and live, and to go in the way of underſtanding; to ſeek unto God betimes, before their hearts were hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin; to come forward with an open profeſſion of religion, and to walk agreeably to the religion, which they profeſs? Will it not be a pleaſure to think that theſe pious youths, animated by your example, have extended and ſpread among others the good, which you began; and that there are, within your knowledge, many pious and virtuous people, who perhaps might have continued and periſhed in their guilty courſe, if you, like ſome, had lived in the contempt of religion, and in the neglect of your ſalvation? And if you ſhould have poſterity, who may live on earth after you are gone, will it not be a great conſolation and joy to ſee them walking in the truth, maintaining religion in their houſes, promoting peace and virtue in ſociety, and ſpreading among their neighbors, and handing over to their ſucceſſors the pious ſentiments, which they received from you? Or whatever may be their conduct, will it not be a ſolace to your minds to reflect, that you have faithfully diſcharged your duty to them, have ſeaſonably inſtructed them in the truth, and have affectionately exhorted them to a holy life, and to appeal to God and them, as witneſſes how holily and juſtly and unblameably you have behaved yourſelves among them?

3d. Early religion will be a comfort to your old age, becauſe it will be attended with a con-

ſciouſneſs, that you have approved yourſelves to God.

Religion, you know, is a ſervice due to God. And if it be due to him at all, it is as really due in youth, as in old age. If you neglect it while you are young, you as impiouſly defraud and rob God, as if you ſhould neglect it when you become old; for you are as much God's creatures, as dependent on him for happineſs, and as accountable to him for your conduct now, as you will be then. If there be any ſervice which you owe to God, the obligation commences with your intellectual capacity, and continues through all ſtages of life; and you can no more plead an exemption from it at one time, than at another.

Now if you ſhould live in the neglect of religion until old age invades you, and ſhould at that time retain any moral and intellectual ſenſibility, you muſt condemn yourſelves for having waſted your beſt days in folly and vice, and reſerved for God the pooreſt and moſt uſeleſs part of life—that part in which you are leaſt able to ſerve him and do good to mankind. This will be like offering the blind, the lame and the torn for ſacrifice. And ſurely you may well be afraid, that ſuch an offering will not be accepted at your hands. If after a life of impiety, you ſhould be ſo happy in the laſt ſtage of your mortal exiſtence, as to exerciſe a ſincere repentance, yet how painful muſt this be? The iniquities of a long life will ſtand in order before you. The matter of your repentance will be, not mere infirmities, or accidental offences, but an habitual courſe of wickedneſs from your earlieſt youth to that ſad hour. How awfully will you have filled up the meaſure of your ſins; what remorſe and anguiſh will ſeize your minds; how will your hope tremble, when it attempts to lay hold on mercy?

To thoſe who ſeek God early there are many encouraging promiſes. But what promiſe will you find for ſuch as refuſe to ſeek him until they are old? Theſe have loſt the benefit of all the encouragements given peculiarly to youth; for they have gone beyond this period. Their hopes muſt now reſt on more general declarations of God's mercy.

But how pleaſant may be the laſt ſtage of life to him who can look back and ſay, "Thou, O God, art my hope, and my truſt from my youth. Thou haſt taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. I have feared thee from my youth, and have not wickedly departed from thee." Such a man carries with him into old age, peace of mind, ſelf-approbation, hope of glory, and joy in God. He can adopt this pious language; "Thou art my portion, O God. I have ſaid, that I will keep thy ſtatutes. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth, that I deſire beſides thee. My fleſh and my heart faileth; but thou art the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion forever."

4. Early piety gives comfort to old age, as it lays a foundation for eminent improvement in religion.

He who begins the religious life, when he is old, has but little time before him for progreſs in divine knowledge, for the correction of wrong biaſſes, for the extirpation of evil habits and the formation of virtuous ones. The holy temper wrought in him will exiſt under great imperfections, and his ſpiritual exerciſes will meet with many difficulties and obſtructions. Conſequently he cannot experience that comfort and pleaſure in religion, which he wiſhes to enjoy; eſpecially in ſo near views of another world.

But they who make religion their early choice and habitual practice, are continually advancing in the divine life. The graces wrought in them by the ſpirit of God, in their renovation, are ſtrengthened by exerciſe, and the duties of the Chriſtian life are facilitated by uſe. And the virtues, which are moſt important to old age, ſuch as ſobriety, contentment, patience, devotion and heavenly mindedneſs, come into familiar and agreeable operation. It is no eaſy matter for an old man to be calm and cheerful under his preſent trials, if he has been anxious and fretful in all his former days. It is difficult for him now to have his converſation in heaven, if it never has been there before. He can have little reliſh for devout and ſpiritual exerciſes, if they are all new to him, and he now begins to learn them. My friends; that religion may bring its conſolations home to your hearts in that evil day, you muſt gain a familiar acquaintance with it in your better days.

5. Religion begun in youth, and continued through the ſubſequent ſtages of life, will be a ſafe ground for ſtrong hope in old age.

The man, who believes, that within a few weeks or months, he ſhall enter into the eternal world, muſt, if any ſenſibility be left, earneſtly deſire a good evidence, that he ſhall be happy there. But this evidence cannot ordinarily be acquired in a day or week. It muſt be the reſult of experience and ſelf-examination. There muſt be opportunity to prove the inward temper and to compare it with the word of God. A ſudden and haſty confidence is generally deceitful, and always precarious. There is no doubt, that ſome, even in old age, may be the ſubjects of a renovating change; but the reality of ſuch a change muſt be

doubtful to them, until they have had more time to prove themſelves, than the aged have reaſon to expect. Such perſons, though they die ſafely, yet cannot wholly diſburden themſelves of previous anxieties and fears.

Therefore, my friends, take up religion in ſeaſon, carry it with you through life, cheriſh it in your old age; then you will have comfort in the decays of your nature, and good hope in your death. Your conſtancy and improvement in religion from early life will be an evidence in your favour, in which you may place confidence. How pleaſant will be this period, when you can review a long life with conſcious approbation, and can look forward into the eternal world with the full aſſurance of hope? How bright will be the evening of your life, when light breaks in on your eyes from the heavenly world? How cheerfully may you ſtep forward into the valley of death, when the light of God's countenance gilds your paſſage? "If you prepare your hearts and ſtretch out your hands to God; if you put away iniquity from your hands and wickedneſs from your ſouls, then ſhall you lift up your faces without ſpot; yea, you ſhall be ſtedfaſt, and ſhall not fear; your age ſhall be clearer than the noon day; you ſhall ſhine forth, you ſhall be as the morning."

6. Early religion brings this additional advantage to old age, that it enſures a more diſtinguiſhed degree of glory in the future world.

The ſcripture aſſures us, that the heavenly rewards will be meaſured out to good men according to the works which they have done for God, and the attainments which they have made in holineſs. "They who have ſowed bountifully, will reap alſo bountifully; and they who have ſowed ſparingly, will reap ſparingly." They who have ſpent

a long life in the ſteady practice of religion, muſt have acquired more virtue in their hearts, brought more honour to God, and done more good to men, than they who never attended to religion before the laſt ſtage of their probation. Conſequently they have a capacity to enjoy, and a title to receive a proportionably larger meaſure of heavenly felicity. There are ſome, who will ſcarcely be ſaved; and ſome whoſe reward ſhall be great. The late penitent will be found in the former claſs; the early Chriſtian in the latter. And, O how pleaſant muſt be the contemplation of death to ſuch aged ſaints, as can depart in the full perſuaſion, that an entrance will be miniſtered to them abundantly into the kingdom of God, and that there they ſhall receive an exceeding and eternal weight of glory?

I have reaſoned with you, my young friends, on the ſuppoſition, that you will live to be old. And now ſay, Does not religion, on this ground, appear to be your higheſt wiſdom? Is not your judgment brought fully over to the ſide, for which I have been pleading? Then fix your reſolution immediately.—Do you heſitate?—There is another argument in your caſe, which certainly forbids delay. It is not certain that you will live to be old. And with reſpect to each of you individually, this is not probable. You ſee ſome die old; you ſee more die young. The uncertainty of life is a powerful reaſon, why you ſhould chooſe God for your hope and your truſt from your youth. Even though you ſhould be ſpared to old age, this early choice is, on many accounts, highly reaſonable and advantageous; if you are to die in youth, and God knows whether this be not your deſtiny, then the choice, which I have recommended, is abſolutely neceſſary. For this is the only time you can have.

If any of you, my aged brethren, have let this time paſs away unregarded, you have loſt your beſt time; and I deplore your loſs. But for heaven's ſake, loſe not what remains. Be humble for paſt neglect, apply with diligence to the work, which you ought to have begun before. Death is advancing; it lingers not. Time is paſſing; it ſlumbers not. It is high time to awake out of ſleep. Wherefore, let me apply to you the words of the apoſtle, "Awake, ye that ſleep, and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give you light. And walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe, redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil."

SERMON V.

The Infirmities and Comforts of Old Age.

A Sermon to Aged People.

MY AGED BRETHREN AND FRIENDS,

YOU will permit an aged man, like yourselves, to speak, this afternoon, a few words to you.....Or, if you please, he will in your hearing speak to himself.....Pertinent to our case, and worthy of our adoption, is the petition of the Psalmist in

PSALM lxxi. 9.

Caſt me not off in the time of old age.....Forſake me not when my ſtrength faileth.

THERE is little doubt, that David was the author of this Pſalm. And from ſeveral expreſſions in it we learn, that he wrote it in his old age. He prays in our text, "Caſt me not off in the time of old age." And, in verſe 18, "Now, when I am old and grey headed, forſake me not." But David, when he died, was but about ſeventy years old, and he probably wrote the Pſalm ſome years before his death; perhaps in the time of

Abſalom's rebellion; for he ſpeaks of "enemies, who then took counſel together, and laid wait for his life." And we find not that he was ever in this perilous and critical ſituation after that rebellion. David, then, realized old age earlier than ſome ſeem to do. He noticed its firſt appearance; he brought it near in his meditations, before it had actually invaded him; or, at leaſt, when he began to perceive its approach in the decline of his ſtrength, and the increaſe of his grey hairs. But many chooſe to view it as diſtant—"Grey hairs are here and there upon them, and they perceive it not." They enjoy, in a comfortable degree, the pleaſures of life; and that evil day, in which there is no pleaſure, they put far from them.

It would be wiſe for us to imitate David's example; to think of, and prepare for the evil day, before it comes; to ſecure God's gracious preſence now; and in our daily prayers to aſk, that "he would not caſt us off in the time of old age, nor forſake us when our ſtrength faileth."

The Pſalmiſt here reminds us, that old age is a time when ſtrength faileth: and that at ſuch a time God's preſence is of peculiar importance.

I. Old age is a time when ſtrength faileth.

There is then a ſenſible decay of *bodily* ſtrength.

As we come into the world, ſo we depart, impotent, feeble and helpleſs. From our infancy we gradually acquire ſtrength, until we arrive to our full maturity. We then for a few years continue ſtationary, without ſenſible change. After a little while we begin to feel, and are conſtrained to confeſs an alteration in our ſtate. Our limbs loſe their former activity; our cuſtomary labour becomes weariſome; pains invade our frame; our ſleep, often interrupted, refreſhes us leſs than

heretofore ; our food is leſs guſtful ; our ſight is bedimmed, and our ears are dull of hearing ; " they that look out at the windows are darkened, and the daughters of muſic are low ;" the pleaſures of reading and converſation abate ; our ancient companions have generally withdrawn to another world, and the few who are left are, like us, ſhut up, that they cannot go forth. Hence ſocial viſits are more unfrequent and leſs entertaining ; and our condition grows more and more ſolitary and diſconſolate.

With our bodily, our *mental* ſtrength uſually declines.

The faculty, which firſt appears to fail, is the *memory*. And its failure we firſt obſerve in the difficulty of recollecting little things, ſuch as names and numbers. We then perceive it in our inability to retain things which are recent. What we early heard or read, abides with us ; but later information is ſoon forgotten. Hence, in converſation, aged people often repeat the ſame queſtions and relate the ſame ſtories ; for they ſoon loſe the recollection of what has paſſed. And hence perhaps, in part, is the impertinent garrulity, of which old age is accuſed. You ſee, then, my young friends, the importance of laying up a good ſtore of uſeful knowledge in early life. What you acquire now, you may retain : later acquiſitions will be ſmall and uncertain. Like riches, they will make themſelves wings and fly away. In the decline of life you muſt chiefly depend on the old ſtock ; and happy, if you ſhall have then a rich ſtore to feed upon.

When memory fails, other faculties ſoon follow. The attention is with more difficulty fixed, and more eaſily diverted : the intellect is leſs acute in its diſcernment, and the judgment more fallible in its deciſions.

The judgment is the laſt faculty which the pride of age is willing to give up. Our forgetfulneſs we cannot but feel, and others cannot but obſerve. But we chooſe to think our judgment remains ſolid and clear. We are never apt to diſtruſt our own opinions; for it is the nature of opinion to be ſatisfied with itſelf. It is certain, however, that judgment muſt fail in ſome proportion to the failure of attention and recollection. We form a juſt judgment by viewing and comparing the evidences and circumſtances, which relate to the caſe in queſtion. If then any material evidence, or circumſtance eſcapes our notice, or ſlips from our memory, the judgment formed is uncertain, becauſe we have but a partial view of the caſe. In all matters, where a right judgment depends on comparing ſeveral things, the failure of memory endangers the rectitude of the deciſion.

When we perceive a decline of bodily and mental ſtrength, fear and anxiety uſually increaſe. Difficulties once trifling now ſwell to a terrifying magnitude, becauſe we have not power to encounter them; want ſtares upon us with frightful aſpect, becauſe we have not capacity to provide againſt it; the kind and patient attention of our friends we diſtruſt, becauſe we know not how long we may be a burden to them, and we have nothing in our hands to remunerate them, except that property which they already anticipate as their own. "The graſshopper now becomes a burden; we riſe up at the voice of the bird; we are afraid of that which is high, and fear is in the way."

This ſtate of infirmity and anxiety, painful in itſelf, is rendered more ſo by the recollection of what we once were, and by the anticipation of what we ſoon ſhall be.

We contraſt our preſent with our former condition—Once we were men ; now we feel ourſelves to be but babes. Once we poſſeſſed active powers ; now we are become impotent. Once we ſuſtained our children and miniſtered to them with pleaſure ; now we are ſuſtained by them ; and we are ſure, our once experienced pleaſure is not reciprocated. Once we were of ſome importance in ſociety ; now we are ſunk into inſignificance. Once our advice was ſought and regarded ; now we are paſſed by with neglect, and younger men take our place : even the management of our own ſubſtance has fallen into the hands of others, and they perhaps ſcarcely think us worthy of being conſulted. And if we are, now and then, conſulted, perhaps our jealouſy whiſpers, that it is done merely to flatter our aged vanity and keep us in good humor.

Such a contraſt Job experienced, and he found it no ſmall aggravation of his adverſity. Looking back to former days, he ſays, " When I went out of the gates through the city, the young men ſaw me, and hid themſelves ; the aged aroſe and ſtood up. When the ear heard me, then it bleſſed me ; and when the eye ſaw me, it gave witneſs to me, becauſe I delivered the poor and fatherleſs, and the bleſſing of thoſe who were ready to periſh, came upon me. But now they who are younger than I have me in deriſion. They abhor me and flee from me. They mar my path, and ſet forward my calamity."

And not only the remembrance of what is paſt, but the fore thought of what is to come, aggravates the calamity of the aged man.

In earlier life hope ſtood by him to comfort him in all his troubles. If he was diſappointed in his buſineſs, he hoped to ſucceed better in a fu-

ture eſſay. If he met with misfortune, he hoped by and by to retrieve it. If he loſt his health, he hoped by time and medicine to regain it. If he ſuffered pain, he hoped it would be ſhort. Whatever calamity he felt, he looked forward to better days. But now hope has quitted its ſtation and retired from his company. "His days are ſpent without hope." The joys of life are fled, never to return. He anticipates the increaſe of infirmities and pains from month to month, and the probable event of total decrepitude and confinement, and the entire loſs of his feeble remains of ſenſibility and intellect.

Well might Solomon call this an evil day.

In the probable expectation of ſuch a day, there is no ſolid comfort, but in the hope of enjoying the preſence of God. Therefore, as we obſerved,

II. We ought to adopt the prayer of David, "Caſt me not off in the time of old age: Forſake me not when my ſtrength faileth."

In the firſt place, the Pſalmiſt may here be ſuppoſed to requeſt, that God would not caſt him off from the care of his providence.

When we have reached old age, or find ourſelves near it, we may reaſonably and properly pray, that God would excuſe us from thoſe pains of body and infirmities of mind, with which ſome have been afflicted; that he would place us in eaſy and unembarraſſed circumſtances, and in connexion with kind and faithful friends; that he would free us from worldly carefulneſs and anxiety, and allow us liberty for thoſe devout exerciſes, which are ſuited to prepare us for our momentous change. David had ſeen the groſs miſbehavior of ſome of his children, and was now probably ſuffering under the cruel perſecution of an ungracious ſon, who wiſhed the father's death, that he might poſ-

ſeſs the father's throne. In this ſituation the old man prays, "Deliver me out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. O God, be not far from me; make haſte to my help." Under this ſevere affliction he doubtleſs requeſted, that God would incline the hearts of his children to treat him with filial duty and affection, and to ſtudy the peace and comfort of his declining age.

The happineſs of the parent, in the latter ſtages of his life, depends much on the good behaviour of his children; and particularly on their kind attention to him. I pity the aged man, who, when his ſtrength fails, looks anxiouſly around, and ſees not a ſon on whom he can lean: no; not a child, who will reach out a hand to ſuſtain his ſinking frame, and guide his tottering ſteps. But I congratulate the happy old man, who ſees his children about him, all attentive to his wants, liſtening to his complaints, compaſſionate to his pains, and emulous each to excell the other in acts of filial duty. I honour the children, when inſtead of ſeeing the old father toſſed from place to place, unwelcome wherever he is ſent, they adopt the language of Joſeph, "Come to me, my father; thou ſhalt be near to me, and I will nouriſh thee." Such filial kindneſs ſoothes the pains, and cheers the ſpirits of the parent. It makes him forget his affliction, or remember it as waters which paſs away.

But, ſecondly, what David principally requeſted was, that God would grant him the preſence of his grace. Thus he prays, in another Pſalm, "Caſt me not away out of thy preſence; take not thy holy ſpirit from me; reſtore to me the joy of thy ſalvation, and uphold me with thy free ſpirit."

His outward man was decaying ; but he ſolicited ſuch ſupplies of grace, as ſhould renew the inward man day by day. In his increaſing infirmities he could take pleaſure, when the power of God reſted upon him ; for however weak in himſelf, he was ſtrong in the Lord.

1. In this prayer he aſks grace, that he may maintain a temper and behaviour ſuited to his age and condition.

It becomes the aged to be *grave* and *ſober*, for they ſtand on the brink of the eternal world. And who would not be ſober there ? If we ſhould ever happen to ſee ſuch men light and vain, addicted to frothy diſcourſe, fond of diſſolute company, and ſeeking guilty amuſements, we ſhould be ſhocked at the ſpectacle. We ſhould naturally conclude, that their hearts were totally alienated from God and religion, and completely ſtupified by the habits of ſin.

It becomes them to be *temperate* and *vigilant*, and to avoid every indulgence, which might tend to increaſe the peeviſhneſs and irritability naturally incident to a period of pain and infirmity.

It becomes them to be *patient* and *reſigned*. As they are ſubject to peculiar trials, and the ſtrength of nature fails, they ſhould implore the preſence of that good ſpirit, whoſe fruits are gentleneſs, meekneſs and long ſuffering. They ſhould call to mind former mercies, and meditate on God's works of old. They ſhould conſider that their time is ſhort, and their trials will ſoon be over. " Now for a ſeaſon, if need be, they are in heavineſs through manifold temptations ; but if patience has its perfect work, the trial of their faith, which is more precious, than that of gold which periſhes, will be found to praiſe and honour at the coming of Chriſt. And theſe light afflictions, which are but for a mo-

ment, will work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

2. They ſhould pray for grace, that by a pattern of piety and heavenly mindedneſs, they may recommend religion to others. They are required to be found in *charity*, as well as patience; not only to bear their troubles with fortitude and dignity, but to exhibit in all things a behaviour, which becometh holineſs, that they may teach the young to be ſober minded. This is the beſt exerciſe of their charity.

David, in his old age, felt a benevolent concern for riſing poſterity. Hence he prays, "O God, forſake me not, when I am old, until I have ſhewed thy ſtrength to this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come."

The aged man, taken off by his infirmities from the active buſineſs of life, can in no way do more ſervice for God and for mankind, than by exhibiting a viſible example of contentment and humility, piety and ſpirituality, faith and hope, in the near views of another world. He thus demonſtrates the excellence and power of religion, and calls on all around him to embrace and cheriſh it, that like him, they may bear affliction with ſerenity, and meet death with fortitude.

3. David here ſolicits communion with God. "Caſt me not off." Deny me not free acceſs to thee. "Turn not away my prayer, nor thy mercy from me."

The good man, in all circumſtances, would maintain a heavenly intercourſe. But he deſires and values this privilege moſt in a time of affliction, and in the near expectation of death. Our Saviour, who was, at all times, filled with a devout ſpirit, exerciſed this ſpirit moſt fervently and frequently toward the cloſe of his life. And ſo ought

the aged saint. As he is discharged from the labours and occupations of the world, let him dismiss his worldly affections and thoughts, and give himself, more than formerly, to self examination, meditation and prayer. Viewing the time as at hand, when, taking leave of all earthly things, he must enter into a new world, mingle in new connexions, and appear in the presence of God, let him employ himself in the contemplation of heaven and in the exercises of devotion, more constantly than he could ordinarily do in former years, when the world had greater demands upon him. Looking forward to the last stage of life, and realizing the condition in which he may then be placed, let him often ask beforehand, that God would give him, at that time, the spirit of prayer in a superior degree; would grant him, under nature's weakness, ability to collect and arange his thoughts, and a fervour of pious affection in making known his requests. This, in a similar case, was the employment and the comfort of the Psalmist. "My soul," says he, "is full of troubles, and my life draweth near to the grave: mine acquaintance are put far from me; and I am shut up, that I cannot go forth." And what could he do in this condition? One thing he could do; and this he did. He applied himself to prayer, which is the best relief of an afflicted soul. "I have called daily upon thee, and to thee have I stretched out my hands. Unto thee have I cried, O Lord, and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. Let my prayer come before thee; incline thine ear to my cry."

4. David, in this petition, "Cast me not off in the time of old age," requests that, by the power of divine grace working in him, his faith and hope might hold out to the last; and that, by the

ſenſible diſplays of divine light, and by increaſing evidence of his title to ſalvation, he might be freed from the diſtreſſing apprehenſion of being finally caſt off and forſaken of his God. Thus he prays, on another occaſion, "Caſt me not away out of thy preſence. Reſtore unto me the joy of thy ſalvation."

In all ſeaſons and conditions of life, the hope of glory is much to be deſired, and earneſtly to be ſought. This will lighten our afflictions and ſweeten our mercies; defend us againſt temptations and ſmooth the path of duty; diſpel the gloom which hovers round the grave, and brighten the proſpect of eternity. But this hope is never more important, or more delightful than in old age.—Now the joys of life have fled, and earthly proſpects are cut off; now the day of probation is expiring, and the ſolemn hour of retribution is at hand. How unhappy the caſe of thoſe, who are going down to the grave without hope, and going to judgment with a conſciouſneſs of unpardoned guilt; who, in the review of life, ſee nothing but vain amuſements, ſenſual pleaſures, earthly affections and avaricious or ambitious purſuits: and in the contemplation of futurity ſee nothing before them, but death, judgment and fiery indignation? But how happy the aged Chriſtian, who can look back on a life employed in works of piety to God, and beneficence to men, and who now feels the ſpirit of devotion and charity warmed within him and acting with freſh vigor to confirm his hopes of heaven, diſpel the fears of death, and light up freſh joys in his ſoul? He can take pleaſure in his infirmities, regarding them as kind intimations, that "now is his ſalvation nearer, than when he believed."

Such was Paul's felicity, when he was ready to

be offered, and the time of his departure was at hand. "I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me in that day." How did Paul obtain this felicity? "He counted not his own life dear to himſelf, that he might finiſh his work with faithfulneſs, and his courſe with joy." He kept under his body to bring it into ſubjection, leſt by any means, when he had preached to others, he himſelf ſhould be a caſtaway." That we may obtain the full aſſurance of hope, we muſt be followers of them, who by faith and patience inherit the promiſes; and in this courſe we muſt give diligence to the end.

Our ſubject powerfully applies itſelf to us, who are advanced in age. We begin to feel the decays of ſtrength, and to perceive the indications of our approaching diſſolution. In a few days, we muſt go the way, whence we ſhall not return. Soon we ſhall ſee man no more with the inhabitants of the earth; but ſhall be placed in new relations and in a new condition. While we tarry here, our infirmities will probably increaſe; our days and nights will become more wearisome; the pleaſures of ſenſe will loſe their reliſh; the burden of worldly buſineſs will be too heavy for our bending ſhoulders; the implements of our labour will drop out of our palſied hands, and we ſhall have no more a portion in any thing that is done under the ſun. And it is not improbable, that ſome of our laſt months may be ſpent in helpleſs confinement of body—ah, and perhaps too in derangement or ſtupor of mind.

Looking forward to ſuch a ſeaſon, let us daily pray, "O God, caſt us not off in the time of old age; forſake us not when our ſtrength faileth.

Give us kind and patient friends, who will cheerfully minister to our necessities and bear our infirmities. Vouchsafe to us rich supplies of thy grace, that we may sustain our own infirmities; may enjoy communion with thee; may maintain our heavenly hope, and by a pattern of Christian piety, charity and spirituality, may commend to those who stand around us that Divine Religion, which is our support, our comfort, and our joy. And if, in thy sovereign wisdom, thou shouldst see fit to deny us the privilege of reason, let the prayers which we now offer be graciously remembered; and grant us pious and prayerful friends, who will send up petitions to thee in our behalf. And whether we shall then be capable of making a petition to thee, or not, we now humbly ask, That thou wouldst not cast us out of thy presence, nor take thy holy spirit from us, but by thine own wonderful and secret operation make us more and more meet for heaven; and when our flesh and our heart shall fail us, be thou the strength of our heart, and our portion forever."

My brethren, if we wish to enjoy the comforts of religion at last, we must cultivate the temper, and keep up the exercise of religion now. It will be no easy matter to take up the business then, unless we have been accustomed to it before.

You, my friends, who are in the midst of life, and you who are young, are not unterested in this subject. You all think, that we, who are aged, need the comforts of religion. God grant, that we may have them. Do you not sometimes think of us in your prayers? We hope you do. But know, if you live to be aged, (and you all desire many days) these comforts will then be as necessary for you as they are now for us. But how can you be sure of them then, unless you ob-

tain an intereſt in them now ? To have the comforts of religion, you muſt have religion itſelf. Embrace it, therefore, in your hearts; cultivate the holy tempers which it requires ; maintain the good works which it enjoins, and aſcertain your title to the eternal bleſſings which it propoſes.— Thus lay up for yourſelves a good foundation againſt the time, which is to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life.

SERMON VI.

Dry Bones Reſtored.

EZEKIEL xxxvii. 3.

And he ſaid unto me, Son of man, can theſe bones live? And I anſwered, O Lord God, thou knoweſt.

THE Jews, having been, for many years, captives in Babylon, viewed a return to their own land as an event much to be deſired, but utterly to be deſpaired of. They were under the power of their enemies, who at that time would not, nor was it thought they ever would, conſent to releaſe them from their bondage. The aged people, who felt an attachment to their native country, were dying off, and the youth were coming forward with a predilection for the land of their captivity. Judea was poſſeſſed by ſtrangers and ſurrounded by enemies; its temple, buildings and walls were in ruins; and how ſhould they ever repoſſeſs it; or, if they ſhould return, what enjoyment could they find there? Their captivity was a puniſhment for their ſins; and in this idolatrous country there was little proſpect of a reformation. They were loſing the religious ſentiments and manners, which ſome had brought with them, and which a few ſtill retained; and they were ſinking deeper into depravity, than when their calamities

began. What hope then could there be of their re-eſtabliſhment in their ancient country and privileges?

To revive the deſponding ſpirits of the pious people among them, God ſends to them the prophet Ezekiel with the relation of a remarkable viſion.

The prophet ſeemed to himſelf to be placed in the midſt of a valley filled with human bones. He paſſed by them round about; he viewed them; he obſerved, that they were numerous, but exceedingly dry, as if they had lain in the open air for a length of time; and that they were ſcattered promiſcuouſly over the ground, as if they never could be collected and reduced to order. God ſays to him, "Son of man, can theſe bones live?" The prophet anſwers, "O Lord God, thou knoweſt." God then commands him, "Propheſy on theſe bones, and ſay, Thus ſaith the Lord, I will cauſe breath to enter into you, and ye ſhall live." So he propheſied, as he was commanded; and "as he propheſied, there was a noiſe and a ſhaking; and the bones came together, bone to his bone, and ſinews and fleſh came upon them, and ſkin covered them. But there was no breath in them." God farther directs him, "Propheſy unto the wind," or breath, "and ſay, Thus ſaith the Lord, Come, breathe on theſe ſlain, that they may live. So he propheſied, and the breath came into them, and they lived and ſtood on their feet, an exceeding great army."

This viſion is applied to the deſponding Jews to conſole them in their captivity. The Lord ſays to the prophet, "Theſe bones are the whole houſe of Iſrael. They ſay, Our bones are dried, our hope is loſt, we are cut off for our part. Say unto them, Thus ſaith the Lord, Behold, O my peo-

ple, I will open your graves, and I will put my ſpirit in you, and ye ſhall live, and I will place you in your own land, and ye ſhall know that I am the Lord."

This viſion was deſigned to repreſent to the captives, not merely a reſtoration to their former privileges, but alſo a happy revival of pure religion. This is one important bleſſing promiſed, "I will put my ſpirit in you and ye ſhall know that I am the Lord."

This was an inſtructive and encouraging viſion to the captive Jews; and it may be uſeful and monitory in its application to us. We will endeavour to improve it in ſome reflections relative to ourſelves. It teaches us,

Firſt; That among a people enjoying the revelation of God, religion ſometimes falls into ſuch a low condition, that there appears to be but little proſpect of its revival.

In Ezekiel's time, the Jews were like dry bones, in which there was no principle of animation. In ſome former periods their ſtate was little better. Such was their degeneracy, that the miniſters of religion were in perplexity, how to addreſs them with effect. "To whom ſhall I ſpeak and give warning, that they may hear. Their ear is uncircumciſed and they cannot hearken. The word of the Lord is a reproach to them, and they have no delight in it." God himſelf ſpeaks, as if his wiſdom, goodneſs and patience had been exerciſed toward them even to wearineſs, yet without ſucceſs. "Ye men of Judah, what could have been done more, that I have not done? I looked for judgment, but behold, oppreſſion; for righteouſneſs, but behold a cry." "O Ephraim, what ſhall I do unto thee? O Judah, what ſhall I do unto thee? For your goodneſs is as the morning cloud; as the early dew it goeth away." When

God aſked Ezekiel whether the dry bones in the valley could live, the prophet, not knowing what anſwer to give, referred the queſtion back to him who propoſed it. The revival of ſuch bones muſt be eminently a work of God; this was plain. But whether God would revive them, or whether he could do it conſiſtently with the honour of his character, and the ends of his government, he only knew. In contemplating the ſtate of this people the prophet's only hope was in the power and mercy of God. "Lord God, thou knoweſt."

Sinners, under the dominion of ſin, are ſaid to be *dead*, as having in them no active principle of ſpiritual life. Speaking of the Epheſians in their gentile ſtate, the Apoſtle ſays, "they were *dead* in treſpaſſes and ſins." He adds "*We*, Jews, had our converſation among *them* in times paſt, fulfiling the deſires of the fleſh and mind." The recovery of both to a ſpiritual life the Apoſtle aſcribes, not to any principle naturally inherent in them, but to the quickening power of divine grace. "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in ſins, hath quickened us together with Chriſt. By grace are ye ſaved."

This deſcription is applied, not to unbelieving gentiles and Jews only, but alſo to ſome degenerate churches. Some of the churches in Aſia had a name to live, but were *dead*. Their members in general were deſtitute of the power of godlineſs; and in their beſt members zeal languiſhed, and love grew cold.

What is ſpoken of thoſe ancient churches may be applied to others in latter times. When licentious opinions and immoral practices prevail; when family religion becomes unfaſhionable; when the ſabbath and the inſtituted worſhip of the ſanc-

tuary are treated with neglect ; when the number of profeſſors is ſmall, and its proportion, in a time of increaſing population, evidently decreaſes ; when the youth are generally indifferent to religion, and few of them join themſelves to the church of God by an open profeſſion of their faith ; when the diſcipline of the church is laid aſide, and profeſſors live like the men of the world ; when they, who pretend to feel the power of religion, withdraw from their brethren, inſtead of co-operating with them in the common cauſe ; when the ceremonies of religion, which were inſtituted as means of union, are made occaſions of uncharitable controverſy and ſeparation ; we may then ſuppoſe ourſelves in the midſt of Ezekiel's valley of dry bones. And if it were aſked, whether theſe bones can live ; we could only anſwer, "Lord God, thou knoweſt."

But in this viſion we are taught,

Secondly; That, in the moſt unpromiſing ſeaſons, there is room to hope, and reaſon to ſtrive for a revival of religion.

God is *able* to make dry bones live.

When Chriſt taught his diſciples, what difficulties might oppoſe their paſſage, and obſtruct their entrance into the kingdom of heaven, they aſked with aſtoniſhment, "who then can be ſaved ? He anſwered, "With God all things are poſſible." He can ſo order events in his providence, as to awaken the careleſs from their ſlumbers. He can impreſs divine truth on the ſtony heart, and bend the iron neck to obedience. He can quicken to holy ſenſibility the ſoul dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.

The ſame almighty grace, which can change one ſoul, can change thouſands. The ſpirit of the Lord is not ſtraitened. He that begins a good work, can ſpread it far around, and make its re-

ſult glorious. The dry bones in Ezekiel's valley were *all* made to live and ſtand on their feet, an exceeding great army.

God is *merciful.* He has no pleaſure in the death of the wicked; his pleaſure is, that they turn from their way and live. He has given his only begotten ſon, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life. He ſtrives with ſinners by his good ſpirit, and reproves them by his word, that they may turn to wiſdom's way. Who can ſay, he has never been a ſubject of this divine ſtriving? Who can ſay, he has never felt a conviction of his ſins, a remorſe for his iniquities, a ſenſe of futurity, and a concern for his ſalvation? To what ſhall men impute theſe uninvited ſenſations, but to the excitations of the ſpirit of grace?

He has opened to guilty mortals a door of hope in the glorious diſcoveries of the goſpel. He has ſent forth his heralds to proclaim to ſinners his gracious pardon, urge them to repentance, and pray them in his name to be reconciled to him. He hearkens and hears whether any ſpeak aright. He waits to be gracious. He exalts himſelf that he may ſhew mercy.

Amidſt ſuch wonderful overtures, the guilty have encouragement to repair to God, and ſay, "Turn thou us, and we ſhall be turned; take away iniquity and receive us graciouſly." The godly have encouragement to pray, "Revive thy work, O Lord, in the midſt of the years, and in wrath remember mercy."

God is *ſovereign.* He ſhews mercy in his own way, and on his own terms. He requires ſinners to ſeek his mercy for themſelves, and ſaints to ſeek it for others. Ezekiel was ſent to propheſy to the dry bones, before they were framed into bod-

ies ; and to propheſy to the wind, before breath came into them.

God brings about the purpoſes of his providence and grace by the intervention of *means*, and uſually by the intervention of *human* means. We are not to expect miracles in the latter, more than in the former. In both we are to be workers together with God. He has directed us to work out our ſalvation, becauſe he works in us ; and to be fellow helpers to one another, becauſe he works with us. When he comes to bring ſalvation, he looks whether there be any to help.

Why has he commanded miniſters to preach the word, to be inſtant in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon, to exhort and rebuke with all longſuffering and doctrine ? Why has he commanded parents to train up their children in knowledge and piety ? Why has he commanded Chriſtians to conſider one another, and provoke unto love and good works ? Why has he commanded them to pray for the ſucceſs of his word among the careleſs and ungodly ? Surely it is his will that ſinners ſhould repent and be happy ; and it is his good pleaſure to hear the prayers and ſucceed the labours of the faithful in ſo benevolent and pious a work.

We cannot ſay, how ſoon good men will receive an anſwer to their prayers, and ſee the fruit of their labours. But God has taught them not be weary in well doing—to pray always and not faint. Their prayers will not be loſt—their labours will not be in vain.

Some may think, no good has been done, becauſe they have ſeen none. But, in this caſe, we are not competent judges. There may be good done which we have not ſeen ; or good may ariſe which we ſee not yet. Perhaps we have not done enough. The time for God to work viſibly may

not be come. We muſt patiently continue in well doing. But though no harveſt ſhould be gathered, faithful labourers will receive their reward. Elijah, diſcouraged by unſucceſsfulneſs, retired to a cave. But God called him forth to his work. "What doſt thou here, Elijah? I have reſerved to myſelf ſeven thouſand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Let us never think, we have done as much as we ought, when there is more that we can do.

Wonderful works of divine grace have been ſeen *in times paſt*. Great ſinners have been reclaimed. Malignant enemies of truth have been conquered. High looks have been brought low. Proud hearts have been captivated to the obedience of Chriſt.

Times of general declenſion have been followed with happy revivals. The church of Iſrael often fell into deep degeneracy. But by the influence of pious rulers, acting in conjunction with zealous prophets, extenſive reformations were effected. How deplorable was the religious ſtate of the Jews in the time of the captivity. They were mingled among the heathens, had imbibed their ſentiments and learned their manners. Few retained the ſpirit of true religion. The ſtated worſhip of God, if not wholly diſcontinued, was enjoyed but imperfectly, and under great reſtraints. They were like dry bones ſcattered in a valley. But by the ſpirit of God co-operating with the miniſtry of a few remaining prophets, they were made to live. In the land of idolatry, they were awakened to a ſenſe of their iniquities, and the iniquities of their fathers, and by repentance obtained a happy reſtoration to their former privileges. They returned to their own land with weeping and ſupplication, and ſought the Lord their God. They aſked the way to

Zion with their faces thitherward. They ſaid one to another, "Come, and let us join ourſelves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant not to be forgotten."

This was a reformation beyond the probability of the means, which they enjoyed. They had ſunk into idolatry in their own land, where the worſhip of the true God was maintained; and who would have expected, that they ſhould be reclaimed from this dreadful corruption, while they dwelt in the midſt of idolaters? But ſo it was. Deprived of their privileges, they began to appreciate them; and to improve to better purpoſe ſuch means as they had.

During the captivity, there were ſome prophets among them. God ſent prophets with them to Babylon; and ſome he raiſed up there to preach to them repentance, inſtruct them in the truth and guard them againſt the corruptions, which ſurrounded them. The labours of theſe good men God bleſſed to the converſion of many, and thus prepared the people for the reſumption of the privileges, which they had once deſpiſed.

God is purſuing a ſimilar method now. Many of our citizens have gone into the wilderneſs, where there is a famine of hearing the word. Some of them probably left the ſtated ordinances of God without regretting the loſs. But God has mercifully ſent his word after them. He has remarkably awakened the benevolent zeal of many Chriſtians to ſend miſſionaries into the wilderneſs. And much ſucceſs has attended their labours. Multitudes, realizing the value of a privilege, which once they little regarded, are now ſeriouſly attentive to the word, whenever they have opportunity to hear it. Many have been awakened to a ſenſe of the importance of religion; have introduced it into their families, and ſeem to have em-

braced it in their hearts. New churches have been formed, and in ſome of them miniſters have been ſettled. It is hoped, that, under the culture of faithful labourers, the wilderneſs will become more and more like a fruitful field.

This leads us to another obſervation,

Thirdly; Whenever there is a revival of religion among a people, it is effected by the preaching of the word. Before the bones in the valley were raiſed and animated, Ezekiel was cauſed to paſs round about them, and obſerve the ſhocking condition in which they lay. Then he was commanded to propheſy upon them, and to ſay, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." His prophecy on the bones was emblematical of his miniſtry to the captive Jews. God ſaid to him, "Theſe bones are the whole houſe of Iſrael. Propheſy, and ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the Lord, I will open your graves and cauſe you to come forth, and ye ſhall know that I am the Lord, and I will put my ſpirit within you."

Though the Jews, generally, were, like bones, hard, inactive, ſenſeleſs, yet the prophet was to preach to them, and call upon them to hear God's word.

Sinners, on account of their indolence, inattention, and want of an inward principle of holineſs, are repreſented as *dead*. This moral deadneſs is a reaſon, why the word ought to be preached to them; for it is a mean, which God has appointed to awaken them. "Awake, thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light."

If it be neceſſary, the word ſhould be ſpoken, it is neceſſary ſinners ſhould hear. "Ye dry bones, *hear* the word of the Lord." Hearing the word does not conſtitute men ſaints; but it is a mean of their becoming ſuch. "God begets them by the word of truth."

We have never known any remarkable reformation effected, but by means of the word. It is by this, that God inſtructs the ignorant, awakens the careleſs, humbles the ſelfconfident, undeceives hypocrites, converts ſinners, and ſaves them who believe. God could by an immediate energy change men's hearts. But he chooſes to treat them as intelligent beings. He calls them to come and reaſon with him. He gives them his word, and requires them to hear it and attend to it. The operation of his ſpirit is indeed neceſſary to the radical renovation of their tempers. But an attendance on the word is the ordinary mean of their obtaining this gracious operation.

Before Ezekiel propheſied to the dry bones, there was no noiſe, or ſhaking among them. They lay ſcattered in the valley. When he propheſied, they began to move and come together. The word often produces an external reformation in ſinners, before the ſpiritual life really begins. The bones in the viſion came together; but there was no life in them. Then Ezekiel propheſied to the wind, and prayed, that this might breathe on them; and they lived and ſtood on their feet. This may denote the power of religion in the ſoul.

As there may be a human form without animal life, ſo there may be a religious form without ſpiritual life. The renovation of the mind is a work of divine grace. "We are ſaved by the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt." But as in the creation of the firſt man, the body was formed, before life was infuſed, ſo in the new creation, there is a reformation of the outward man, before a holy principle is wrought in the ſoul. The ſinner, under ſenſible convictions and awakenings, renounces the groſs forms of vice, and attends to

external duties on the natural principles of hope and fear. Such a correction of manners uſually precedes that renovation of heart, which conſiſts in a direct and univerſal love of righteouſneſs.

Renewing grace is to be ſought by prayer. "For this God will be enquired of."

Where a general revival of religion begins, a ſpirit of prayer will be apparent in many; in the teachers and profeſſors of religion, and in thoſe who are the ſubjects of convictions and awakenings. When the prophet prayed, "Come, O wind, breathe on theſe ſlain, the breath came into them, and they lived." Previous to the converſion of the Jews in the latter days, God will pour on them the ſpirit of grace and of ſupplication. Whenever we ſee ſuch a ſpirit poured out, we may expect happy conſequences to enſue. It is a token that God is about to perform ſome great and good work. The apoſtle exhorts the Chriſtians in Rome to ſtrive together with him, in their prayers, for the ſucceſs of his miniſtry. If God gives a ſpirit of prayer, he has ſomething elſe to give. He has not ſaid to us, "Seek ye me in vain." "The effectual fervent prayers of the righteous avail much." Where they agree together concerning any thing, which they would aſk, and which they ought to aſk, it will be done for them by their heavenly father.

There is one thing more here to be obſerved,

Fourthly; When Ezekiel propheſied on the bones ſcattered promiſcuouſly in the valley, they *came together*, bone to his bone, and ſinews came upon them. This circumſtance in the viſion ſuggeſts to us, that where a real revival of religion takes place among any people, there will be order, harmony and peace. Religion is not altogether a private and perſonal thing; it is, in its nature,

ſocial, friendly and benevolent. It ſeeks the general good. It ſtudies the happineſs of all within its reach. And wherever it extends its proper influence, it brings men together into a well regulated ſociety. It puts every member and bone of the body in its natural place, and binds the parts one to another by the joints and ſinews of reciprocal affection, and mutual kindneſs.

There is ſometimes a noiſe and ſhaking among dry bones, which is followed with quite different effects. The bones, inſtead of coming together, each in its place, to form a regular, compact body, fly off from one another, ſo that they can form nothing like a body; or they meet in total confuſion and diſorder, one bone ruſhing into the place, and one member aſſuming the office of another, and all without ſinews to hold them together, and without joints to perform regular movements.

Thus they form, not a proper body, but a miſſhapen, diſcordant maſs. Such a ſhaking as this, is very different from that which the prophet ſaw in the valley.

Where real religion has dominion in the ſoul, it ſubdues turbulent paſſions; it introduces and enlivens kind affections; it brings all the faculties into ſubjection to God, and into harmony with one another. Where it ſpreads among a people, it inſpires them with mutual love, joins them together in the ſame mind, ſoftens their hearts to ſympathy in affliction, and prompts them to encourage and aid one another in their ſpiritual intereſts. In a word, it forms ſuch a body, as the apoſtle deſcribes; a body united to, and depending on its proper head, from which all the parts, by joints and bands, having nouriſhment miniſtered, increaſeth with the increase of God. Such a body will grow unto a perfect man, and will riſe

to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt.

Charity is the bond of perfectneſs. It is this which completes the Chriſtian character. It is this which conſummates the beauty, and conſolidates the ſtrength of a Chriſtian ſociety. This is the mark which diſcriminates true religion from falſe zeal.

The edifying of the church in love is the end of all divine ordinances. We are to come together in the church, to worſhip together in the ſanctuary, to ſit together at Chriſt's table, to eat of his bread and drink of his cup, that we may be united together in one body, and may grow into an holy temple in him.

How joyful would it be to behold a revival like that, which the prophet beheld in viſion—to ſee dead ſinners ariſing from the duſt, animated with ſpiritual life, caſting off their filthy garments and putting on the robes of righteouſneſs, engaging with united zeal in works of piety and charity, encouraging each other in a devout attendance on all divine inſtitutions, and keeping the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace.

Such a revival will be ſeen in the latter day. Let us pray, that ſomething of the ſame kind may be ſeen now.

Awake, ye that ſleep, ariſe from the dead; Chriſt will give you light. Awake, awake, put on ſtrength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jeruſalem. Ariſe, ſhake thyſelf from the duſt. Let not the unclean paſs through thee. Cleanſe thyſelf from all thy filthineſs, and perfect holineſs in the fear of the Lord. Then ſhall thy children break forth into joy, and ſing together. Then ſhall the waſte places become fruitful fields, and their dew ſhall be as the dew of herbs. Then the Lord ſhall make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and the ends of the earth ſhall ſee his ſalvation.

SERMON VII.

Birds and Beaſts Preaching to Men.

JOB xii. 7.

Ask the beaſts now, and they ſhall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they ſhall tell thee:——

ONE of the fathers of the Roman church, taking in the moſt abſolute ſenſe Chriſt's command to his diſciples, "Go, preach the goſpel to *every creature*," went and preached to *birds* and *beaſts*. This certainly was no part of Chriſt's commiſſion to his apoſtles. But though men are not commanded to preach to beaſts and birds; yet God in his providence has appointed *theſe* to preach to men. Job, to confute certain erroneous opinions advanced by his friends, refers them for inſtruction to the beaſts of the field, and the fowls of heaven. "Aſk them, and they will teach you."

The ſcripture inſtructs us, not only by plain doctrines and precepts, but alſo by pertinent images and alluſions. Among other methods of inſtruction, it refers us to certain diſpoſitions obſervable in the animals around us. For though theſe creatures are not capable of moral conduct, yet there are in them certain inſtinctive actions, which are emblems of human virtues. Hence the ſcripture often ſends us to them for inſtruction and reproof. To them our text calls our attention.

But leſt, in the contemplation of theſe inferior creatures we ſhould ſeem to deſcend below the dignity of a religious ſubject, we will confine ourſelves to the examples preſented to us by the ſcripture itſelf, which always treats the moſt familiar ſubjects with ſuch a dignity, as gives them importance and commands reſpect.

I. The beaſts reprove our *unmindfulneſs* of, and *ingratitude* to our Divine Benefactor.

"Hear, O heavens," ſays the prophet, "and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath ſpoken; I have nouriſhed and brought up children, but they have rebelled againſt me. The *ox* knoweth his owner, and the *aſs* his maſter's crib; but Iſrael doth not know; my people doth not conſider."

The prophet here ſelects for an example thoſe creatures which are generally eſteemed dull and intractable. Yet even *theſe*, he ſays, rebuke the unthankfulneſs of men; for they look to the hand from which they have been fed, and repair to the crib from which they have been ſupplied. They wait for their maſter's bounty, and receive it with tokens of gratitude. But man, thankleſs man, forgets the *heavenly benefactor*, who daily loads him with benefits, and gives him all things richly to enjoy. Man lives on God's goodneſs, yet God is ſeldom in his thoughts. He ſeeks his ſupplies without a ſenſe of dependence, and eats his meals without an acknowledgment of obligation. He riſes to his labour without imploring the divine bleſſing, and lies down to ſleep without aſking the divine protection. He has been, from his youth, ſuſtained by God's care, and yet continues in rebellion againſt him.

Look to your domeſtic animals: are they as unmindful of you, as you are of your God? Do they treat you with the neglect, with which you

treat your heavenly parent? The want of language to expreſs a ſenſe of dependence they ſupply by ſignificant actions. You have language: employ your tongue in prayers and praiſes to God. You have reaſon: let his mercies perſuade you to glorify him in all your actions. While you live in diſobedience and unthankfulneſs to God, without a ſenſe of his goodneſs, and without a regard to his will, the beaſts, which ſerve you, reprove and condemn you.

II. How many are there, who, while they enjoy a fulneſs of worldly good, are *diſcontented* with their worldly condition, and always *murmuring* againſt the ways of providence, as if theſe were partial and unequal? Do you ſee this diſpoſition in the brutes? "Doth the wild aſs bray, when he hath meat? Or loweth the ox over his fodder?"

The brutes have their natural wants; and when *theſe* are ſupplied, they are contented. But man is ever craving, and can never have enough. His avarice has no limits; his ambition knows no bounds. The wants of nature are few and ſmall. The wants of imagination are endleſs and inſatiable. The world is full of complaints. Every one ſeems more or leſs diſſatisfied with his own condition, and deſirous to exchange it for that of ſome other man. The general enquiry is, "Who will ſhew us any good?" But what do you want? Have you not much good now? You enjoy health, liberty and competence. You have food to eat, raiment to put on, houſes to dwell in, and friends to converſe with. You have ſecurity in your perſons and properties, ability to labour in your callings, and capacity to enjoy the fruits of your labour; you uſe them as your own, diſpoſe of them as you pleaſe, conſume what you need, and lay by the reſt for future occaſions. And why are

you not contented ?—One murmurs at the unequal diſtributions of providence ; another complains of the injuſtice of his fellow men ; this man is diſſatisfied with one thing, and that man with another, and almoſt every man with ſomething. But all this murmuring proceeds from unreaſonable paſſions, from pride, avarice, ambition and luſt. Pride demands more homage, than men are willing to beſtow. Avarice ſeeks more property than the world has to give. Ambition aſpires to more power than can be lodged in mortal hands. Luxury afflicts itſelf by ſeeking more pleaſure than an animal can enjoy. It is the diſappointment of theſe reſtleſs paſſions, which is the ground of all our complaints. The beaſt is free from theſe paſſions, and contented when his real wants are ſupplied : man, who is endued with reaſon, ſhould ſubdue theſe paſſions ; then he will be contented in his place. This is the inſtruction of religion, " Let your converſation be without covetouſneſs, and be content with ſuch things as ye have ; for ye brought nothing into the world, and ye can carry nothing out of it."

III. The fowls of the air reprove our *inattention to the warnings* of providence.

" The ſtork in the heavens," ſays the prophet, " knoweth her appointed time, and the turtle, the crane, and the ſwallow obſerve the time of their coming ; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord : How do ye ſay, We are wiſe, and the law of the Lord is with us ? Surely in vain made he it ; the pen of the ſcribes is in vain."

The fowls exactly mark and punctually obey the admonitions of the ſeaſons. No aſtronomer is more accurate, than they, in obſerving ; no ſeaman is more careful, than they, in following

the aſpects of the heavens. They deſcry the prognoſticks of approaching ſtorms, and ſeek ſecure retreats. As winter advances, they fly to warmer regions; and again they return with the returning ſpring. But how inattentive are men to the ſigns, which warn them of threatening dangers, and which call them to immediate repentance, as the means of ſafety?

God inſtructs us by his word, and admoniſhes us by his providence. The language of his providence is explained by his word. When iniquities abound, we are taught, that judgments are preparing. When judgments are abroad, we are exhorted to learn righteouſneſs. The calamities, which fall on others, we are commanded to regard as warnings to ourſelves. But how inattentive are men in general to theſe admonitions? A ſudden death will perhaps have a temporary effect on ſome: but how few are awakened to prepare for a death as ſudden? The prevalence of mortal ſickneſs creates an alarm within the circle of its ravages, and excites a ſolicitude to prevent, or eſcape its attacks: but rarely does it produce a general and durable reformation? We hear of ſuch a calamity at a diſtance; we make it a ſubject of enquiry and converſation; we ſpeculate on the natural cauſes, the probable preventives, and moſt approved remedies; and thus let it paſs away as an unintereſting piece of intelligence. While others are deſtroyed from morning to evening, they periſh without any regarding it. A mortality near to us affects us more ſenſibly, than a mortality at a diſtance; but whether diſtant or near, its moral inſtructions and admonitions are the ſame. In both caſes, it alike teaches us the uncertainty of our health and life—of our children and friends; and the importance of an imme-

diate preparation for the events, which await us in this changing, dying world. And yet how few apply it to this wife and ſerious purpoſe? Do not the fowls, who obſerve the temperature of the air, and the aſpect of the ſkies, diſcover a wiſdom, which condemns our folly? They regard the ſeaſons appointed them for changing their climes: we neglect the ſeaſon aſſigned to us to prepare for a greater change; a change of worlds. When we ſee their attention to the tokens given them in the courſe of nature, let us pay equal attention to the admonitions given us in the courſe of providence.

IV. The ſcripture ſends us to the fowls to learn *heavenly affection* and *zeal*. "They who wait on the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength; they ſhall mount up with wings, *as eagles;* they ſhall run and not be weary; they ſhall walk and not faint."

The eagle is deſcribed, in the book of Job, as a fowl of vigorous wing, elevated flight and penetrating eye. "She mounts aloft, makes her neſt on high, and her eyes behold afar off." She loves the ſublimer regions of the air, ſoars above the clouds, and lives in the beams of the ſun. If ſhe deſcends to the earth, it is to collect her food; ſoon ſhe returns to dwell in her favourite ſkies. She is an emblem of Chriſtian faith and hope, heavenly mindedneſs and zeal. She delights in a lofty aſcent. Shall Chriſtians cleave to the duſt? We are, indeed, like the eagle, to ſeek on earth food for the ſupport of our bodies: but our ſouls muſt riſe on the wings of hope and faith to dwell in a higher region and a purer ſky.

The goſpel opens to our view a glorious world, where God manifeſts his wonderful perfections, where the redeemer diſplays his lovely character, and where ſaints rejoice in adoration and praiſe.

That is a diſtant world; but our eyes, like the eagle's, ſhould ſee afar off. We ſhould look beyond this cloudy atmoſphere, into the regions of eternal day—regions which need not our ſun, being always enlightened with the glory of God. "If ye be riſen with Chriſt," ſays the apoſtle, "ſeek the things, which are above, where Chriſt ſitteth on the right hand of God; ſet your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Chriſt in God; and when he ſhall appear, then ſhall ye alſo appear with him in glory."

If the eagle, forgetting her wings, ſhould reſt on the ground, and feed on the dunghill, ſhe would be a proper emblem of ſuch inconſiſtent Chriſtians, as place all their affections, and employ all their cares on this world, while they profeſs to live by the faith and hope of a better.

V. The fowls *rebuke* our unreaſonable *carefulneſs* and *anxiety* about the things of the preſent life. "Take no thought for your life," ſays our Lord, "what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink, nor for your body, what ye ſhall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they?"

God's providence over his creatures is exerciſed in a manner adapted to their different natures. Some inſects and animals are endued with an inſtinct, which directs them, in ſummer, to provide ſtores for their ſupply in winter. But the fowls, which are formed for paſſage, have no occaſion for winter ſtores; for when ſupplies fail in one place, they can with ſpeed and facility paſs to another. They have neither ſtore-houſes, nor barns, but

commit themſelves to providence in the way, in which nature guides them. In this way God ſupplies their wants. "He gives to the beaſt his food, and to the young ravens which cry. Theſe all wait on him, and receive their meat in ſeaſon." Men are endued with intellect, forethought and a capacity for labour; and for them God provides by ſmiling on their prudence and induſtry. "They are to work with their hands the thing which is good, that they may have lack of nothing, and may have ſomething to give to ſuch as need." "He who gathereth in ſummer is a wiſe ſon; but he who ſleepeth in harveſt is a ſon who cauſeth ſhame." While we purſue the duties of our calling with diligence, and uſe the fruits of our labour with temperance, we are to truſt the care of providence without anxiety. This is our Lord's meaning, when he ſays, "Take no thought for the morrow." That thoughtfulneſs for the things of the world, which is attended with immoderate deſire, perplexing fear, diſtruſt of God and neglect of duty, is condemned by religion, by reaſon, and even by nature itſelf. "Take no ſuch thought for theſe things; for theſe are the things, after which the gentiles ſeek; but ſeek ye firſt the kingdom of God, and theſe things ſhall be added to you, as far as you need, and your heavenly father ſeeth, how far you need them." What good will your anxiety do you? Can you by this add a cubit to your ſtature, or a moment to your life? God has hitherto preſerved your life: can you not truſt him to preſerve it ſtill, and to afford you its conveniences? Look up to the heavens; and ſee how he ſuſtains the fowls. They live on his bounty without anxiety. What he gives, they enjoy with cheerfulneſs. What he ſcatters they gather and are filled with good. Can you not

truſt the providence, which ſupports *them?* Purſue, like them, the courſe, which he has marked for you; and doubtleſs you will receive ſuch things as you need. "Commit yourſelves to him, for he is a faithful creator. Caſt all your cares upon him, for he careth for you."

VI. Theſe thoughts naturally introduce another leſſon. Solomon ſends the ſluggard to the *ants*, that from them he may learn *diligence*, *prudence* and *forethought*. "Go to the *ant*, thou ſluggard, conſider her ways, and be wiſe, which, having no guide, overſeer, or ruler, provideth her meat in ſummer, and gathereth her food in harveſt."

The man, who neglects the proper ſeaſon of buſineſs; who gives to ſleep and amuſement the time which he owes to his own and his family's ſupport; who ſubſtitutes fruitleſs wiſhes for active labours; who raiſes imaginary difficulties that he may excuſe himſelf from neceſſary duties, we call a ſluggard; and Solomon calls him ſo too. But many, who are the reverſe of this character in common life, deſerve it in the moral ſenſe. Wholly occupied in the affairs of the world, they pay no attention to the culture of their minds, the correction of their tempers, the reformation of their lives, and their preparation for the world to come. It is the diligent hand which makes rich, in ſpiritual, as well as in temporal treaſures. How much ſoever one may labour for treaſures on earth, if he lay up none in heaven, he is ſtill idle, and ſtill poor.

Solomon counſels the ſluggard to conſider the *ways*, and learn the *wiſdom* of the *ant*. She looks well to the *future*, "providing her meat in ſummer:" ſhe improves the favorable *opportunity*, "gathering her food in harveſt:" ſhe attends to her work with diligence, while the ſeaſon laſts.

Thus ſhe lives through winter, in which a thouſand more gay and muſical inſects periſh with hunger and cold.

All this ſhe does, though ſhe has no *guide* to preſcribe her work; no *overſeer* to urge her diligence, and no *ruler* or *judge* to puniſh her neglect. How does this ſmall and contemptible creature reprove the folly and negligence of men?

Many give themſelves to indolence, pleaſure and diverſion, while their worldly neceſſities urge them to induſtry. Many devote themſelves to the cares of the world, when there is one thing needful, which demands their attention. Many beſtow all their thoughts and labours upon the intereſts of this mortal ſtate, when they ought to look forward to the eternal world, and provide for a happy exiſtence there. How is the day of ſalvation neglected? How is the fine ſeaſon of youth waſted? How are ſabbaths profaned? How are the warnings of providence deſpiſed? How are the ſtrivings of the ſpirit reſiſted?

Thus thouſands live in ſloth and negligence, though they have a guide, overſeer and ruler. There is a conſcience within them, which reproves their neglect; there is a law given them to direct their conduct; there is an allſeeing God, who inſpects their actions, and who will bring every work into judgment with every ſecret thing, whether it be good or evil, and will render to every man according to his doings.

Go, then, to the ant, thou ſluggard; conſider her ways, and be wiſe.

I ſhall add only one example more. That in all our Chriſtian conduct we may learn to unite innocence with prudence, and ſimplicity with caution, Chriſt refers us to the *ſerpent* and the *dove*. "Behold," ſays he to his diſciples, "I ſend you forth,

as lambs among wolves : be ye therefore wiſe as *ſerpents*, and harmleſs as *doves*."

Our Lord, when he was on earth, would not commit himſelf to men ; for he knew what was in men. The ſame caution he injoins on his diſciples. " If they perſecute you in this city, flee to another." This probably is his intention, when he ſays, " Be ye wiſe as ſerpents." For the wiſdom of the ſerpent lies principally in his art to obtain his ſuſtenance, and in his caution to avoid his enemies. But then our Lord inſtructs them, that with their wiſdom they muſt join *innocence*, of which the *dove* is a pattern. She is ever harmleſs and inoffenſive : ſhe never moleſts other creatures : ſhe makes no war on birds of different ſpecies : with thoſe of her own ſpecies, ſhe aſſociates in amity and peace ; and in her ſpecial friendſhips ſhe is diſtinguiſhed by her fidelity and love.

In times of danger, we are to conſult our ſafety. When evil threatens us, we are to foreſee it, and hide ourſelves. But whatever unjuſt deſigns we may ſuſpect, we muſt uſe no ſinful artifice to defeat them. Whatever injuries we receive, we muſt indulge no thoughts of revenge. This is Saint Peter's advice to Chriſtians in a time of perſecution ; " Let none of you ſuffer as an evil doer, or as a buſybody in other men's matters ; yet if any man ſuffer as a Chriſtian, let him not be aſhamed. For it is better, if the will of God be ſo, that ye ſuffer for well doing than for evil doing. And let them, who ſuffer according to the will of God, commit themſelves to him in well doing. For who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good ?" But if any be ſo malignant, as to harm you for your goodneſs, remember, " that when ye ſuffer for righteouſneſs' ſake, happy are ye."

We might farther purſue theſe illuſtrations under the guidance of ſcripture; but perhaps they have already become tedious.

There is one reflection, which here naturally ariſes; that the beaſts may be of moral, as well as ſecular benefit to us. We employ them in our ſervice, uſe them for our food, and from them collect materials for our clothing. But this is not all the uſe which we are to make of them; we are to learn *wiſdom* from them. And perhaps one reaſon, why God has placed us in a condition, which requires us to be converſant with them, is that we may thus gather moral inſtructions from the actions which we ſee in them.

It is, however, a humbling thought, that we ſhould need inſtruction, and ſhould ſo often meet reproof from the animals, which we deſpiſe. Surely we are much fallen from the dignity of rational beings; we are much depraved in the diſpoſition of our hearts; we are much corrupted in our ſentiments and actions; elſe God would not ſend us to learn wiſdom and virtue from theſe inferior creatures. God has given us underſtanding, and made us wiſer than the beaſts of the field, or the fowls of heaven. But our underſtanding is darkened through the ignorance that is in us, becauſe of the blindneſs of our hearts. Our reaſon is enſlaved to paſſion and luſt. Our judgment is perverted by earthly affections. Hence the brutal creatures are ſo often propoſed to us as emblems of the wiſdom and virtue, which we have loſt and which we ought by all means to regain. Their example, however, is but a ſubordinate auxiliary to means more excellent and wonderful.

Let us rejoice in the rich and glorious proviſion which God has made for our recovery from this diſhonorable and dangerous apoſtacy. He has

given us a revelation from heaven. This teaches us, that all have ſinned, and fallen under condemnation to death and miſery—that a ſaviour has come to redeem us by his blood—that the divine ſpirit is ſhed down to renew us by his influence, and that God gives his holy ſpirit to them, who aſk him. Convinced of our guilt and depravity, let us repair to the God of grace, ſupplicate his pardon in the name of his ſon, and implore the kind influence of that good ſpirit, which is able to renew our hearts, ſubdue our luſts, brighten our underſtanding and purify our ſouls. And under this heavenly influence let us aſpire to improvement in knowledge and virtue, and to the purity and perfection of our nature, that we may be qualified to aſſociate with angels, and with them to dwell in the immediate preſence of the creator.

SERMON VIII.

Joab laying hold on the Horns of the Altar.

I. KINGS ii. 30.

—— And he ſaid, Nay, but I will die here.

THIS is the reſolution of Joab, who had fled to the altar, as his laſt refuge, when he knew, that king Solomon had determined to take away his life.

This Joab was a man of great diſtinction in the reign of David. The king made him the chief commander of his army, and principal counſellor in war; and the duties of his high ſtation he executed with wiſdom, fidelity and courage. By his long continuance and eminent ſervices in his office, he had acquired ſuch unbounded influence among the ſoldiery, that he aſſumed, in ſome caſes, an imperious controul over the king himſelf.

On certain occaſions he expreſſed ſome ſenſe of religion. David's order for numbering the people "was abominable to Joab," and he remonſtrated againſt it as what would be "a cauſe of treſpaſs to Iſrael." Before his famous battle with the combined forces of Syria and Ammon, he addreſſed the officers of his army in a ſpeech, which ſa-

voured highly of patriotiſm and piety; "Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people and the cities of our God. And the Lord do that, which ſeemeth him good."

But though he occaſionally expreſſed ſome pious ſentiments, yet in his habitual temper he was haughty, deceitful and ferocious. In an inſidious and treacherous manner, and from mere jealouſy and envy he aſſaſſinated two men, Amaſa and Abner, who were more righteous than himſelf. After the ſuppreſſion of Abſalom's rebellion, Joab threatened the king with another and more dangerous inſurrection, if he continued to indulge his immoderate grief for the death of an unnatural ſon. When, in the decline of David's life, Adonijah uſurped the throne, Joab joined the party of the uſurper, though he muſt have known, that the king intended to make Solomon his ſucceſſor. This complication of crimes induced David to leave it in charge to Solomon, that he ſhould not ſuffer Joab to go down to the grave in peace.

Solomon, after his father's demiſe, being firmly ſeated on his throne, cauſed Adonijah to be put to death; and he depoſed and baniſhed Abiathar the prieſt, who had been deeply concerned in the late uſurpation. Joab, hearing what meaſures the king was taking, and being conſcious of his own crimes, and perhaps knowing David's charge to Solomon, expected, that his own fate muſt ſoon follow. He therefore fled to the tabernacle and caught hold on the horns of the altar. Solomon, being informed of Joab's flight to the altar, ſent an officer to fall upon him. The officer came to him and ſaid, "Thus ſaith the king, Come forth," that the altar be not ſtained with thy blood. Joab replied, "Nay, but I will die here." On a ſecond order from the king, he was executed in that place.

In the land of Iſrael cities of refuge were appointed for the ſecurity of the man, who had ſlain his neighbour unawares; and the tabernacle, at the door of which ſtood the altar of burnt-offering, was in ſome caſes allowed to be a place of refuge for the manſlayer. But neither the cities nor the tabernacle were to yield protection to a wilful murderer. When it appeared, on examination, that the man came preſumptuouſly on his neighbour to ſlay him with guile, the divine order was expreſs, "Thou ſhalt take him from mine altar, that he may die."

Joab muſt have been too well acquainted with the law of God, to ſuppoſe, that a wilful murderer and a rebel againſt the government, ſuch as he was, could be ſaved from death by fleeing to the altar.

The preſervation of life was not his object in this action; for he expected ſtill to die. He ſaid, "I will die here." It is probable he viewed this flight to the altar as an act of religion, which became a dying ſinner, and would procure him pardon and acceptance with an offended God. His crimes were ſuch as no ſacrifice of beaſts could expiate, for the law had provided no atonement for preſumptuous ſins. If he muſt die, he would die on the altar, and make himſelf the ſacrifice, and his blood the atonement. If this laſt act was accompanied with repentance of his ſins and faith in the mercy of God, he certainly was forgiven. Whether this was the ſtate of mind in which he died, the ſtory is ſilent, and we cannot judge.

There is, however, one very ſerious and important truth here ſuggeſted; "that men, who have lived all their days without a regard to religion, may wiſh for the benefit and protection of it, when they die."

In the hiſtory of Joab's life, there is nothing, which indicates a governing ſenſe of moral obligation and a future retribution. We find him guilty of the moſt flagrant crimes; but we never hear from him any expreſſions of remorſe; we never ſee him at the tabernacle ſeeking the mercy of God by prayer, nor at the altar preſenting a ſacrifice for any of his ſins. His life ſeems to have been ſpent in the purſuit of military glory. To this object he could ſacrifice the lives of better men than himſelf, when they ſtood in his way. And if he ever reſorted to religion, it was in ſome critical conjuncture, when danger nearly threatened him.

But now Joab has finiſhed his military and political career. He is no longer to command an army, or direct a cabinet. He is grown old. He has filled up the meaſure of his crimes. Juſtice has drawn the ſword, and the day of execution is come. He ſees no eſcape; he flees to the tabernacle and lays hold on the altar. Here he remains fixed, and here he reſolves to die. He wiſhes to be protected, in his death, by that religion, which he had neglected in his life.

This is no ſingular caſe. Similar examples are recorded in ſcripture, and ſimilar examples occur to common obſervation.

Pharaoh, that impious contemner of God, and hardened oppreſſor of the people of God, could relent under a judgment, which threatened deſtruction to himſelf and his realm. He could then acknowledge his dependence on a ſuperior inviſible power. He could call for the ſervants of Jehovah in haſte, and urge their interceſſion in his own and his country's behalf. He could ſay, "I have ſinned againſt the Lord your God, and againſt you; now therefore forgive my ſin, and intreat the Lord,

that he may take away from me this death only." But, "when he saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart." Of Ahab king of Israel it is said, "There was none like him, who sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord." But when he heard the awful sentence of destruction, which God denounced against him and his house, "he rent his cloathes, put sackcloth on his flesh, fasted and went softly." Yet after this he could threaten and imprison a prophet of God for honestly warning him of his danger, and could treat a premonition from God with insolent contempt. When God wrought wonders in the wilderness to supply the wants of his people, "they sinned yet more against him and tempted him in their hearts: but when he slew them, then they sought him; they turned and enquired early after him; and they remembered, that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer; yet they flattered him with their lips, and they lied to him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." The Psalmist speaks of it as a common case, that, "when fools," the despisers of religion, "are by their sins brought near to the gates of death, then they cry to the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses; he healeth them, and delivereth them from destruction." Yet he intimates, that few "praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men." Solomon observes, that they, who in their prosperity despise the reproofs and set at nought the counsels of wisdom, will call on God and seek him earnestly in times, when distress and anguish come upon them. He describes a profligate youth, as mourning at the last, when his flesh and body were consumed, and lamenting,

that in his better days he had been in almoſt all evil, and had hated inſtruction and deſpiſed reproof. The infidels and idolaters, in the days of Jeremiah the prophet, turned their back unto the true God, and would not even acknowledge him as their creator and preſerver. "They ſaid to a ſtock, Thou art our father; and to a ſtone, Thou haſt brought us forth:" but in the time of their trouble, when all ſupport failed them, they would repair to God, and ſay, "*Ariſe and ſave us.*"

Caſes of the like nature are not unfrequent now. There are many under goſpel light, who appear to live regardleſs of religion. If they believe its general truth, yet they feel not its particular and preſent importance. They devote themſelves to the pleaſures and intereſts of the world, and give the momentous concerns of eternity no place in their hearts. They make no profeſſion of religion; and the duties of it they practiſe no farther than their worldly deſigns require. They ſeldom attend on the appointed worſhip of God's houſe, and perhaps as ſeldom addreſs their maker in a more private manner. They are pleaſed with the converſation of thoſe, who talk lightly about religion; and they readily embrace the licentious opinions which they hear, becauſe theſe pacify their troubled conſciences, and quiet their guilty fears, in the courſe which they are purſuing. If they do not openly reject religion, yet they fondly admit doubts of its truth, or, at leaſt, of the truth of its more important doctrines, and never take the trouble to enquire, what religion really is, on what ground it ſtands, or what is their own character. Thus they paſs careleſsly along in the calm ſeaſons of life. But if you were to viſit theſe perſons in a time of ſickneſs, when they had the

ſentence of death in them, and even deſpaired of life, I am confident, you would find many of them in a different ſtate of mind. You would not hear them talk ſo doubtfully about the truth, or ſo lightly about the importance of religion, as they uſed to do. You would not perceive them ſeeking comfort in annihilation, or in promiſcuous ſalvation. Their final deſtiny now appears too near, and too ſolemn to be trifled with. They wiſh for a hope, which can reſt on a ſolid and permanent foundation. How much ſoever they have deſpiſed prayer in time paſt, they now direct their thoughts and deſires to the mercy of God as their only hope. How indifferently ſoever they have ſpoken of the goſpel, they now ſee no where elſe to go for the words of eternal life. How much ſoever they may have ridiculed the men of prayer, they now ſolicit a ſhare in the interceſſions of ſuch men. How much ſoever they have neglected the altar of God, they now wiſh to lay hold on the horns of it, and, if they muſt die, to die there.

This, indeed, is not the caſe of *all* dying ſinners. Some die ſuddenly, ſome in the diſtraction or ſtupor of diſeaſe, and ſome in habitual hardneſs of heart. But it is the caſe of many; and we rarely meet with a caſe which is the reverſe of it; I mean the caſe of one, who, in the near expectation of death, will diſavow all regard to religion, glory in his wickedneſs, or place full confidence in his licentious principles. The moſt daring infidels, and the moſt boaſting univerſaliſts have been known to ſhudder at the gates of death, to diſtruſt their former opinions, and ſeek refuge in the grace of the goſpel. Even a *Voltaire*, who in the moſt audacious manner profaned God's altar in his life, ſought to lay hold on the horns of

it at his death. Though he employed his keeneſt wit to wound the goſpel of Chriſt, yet he wiſhed to die a Chriſtian; and, it is ſaid, would have declared himſelf ſuch, had he not been diſſuaded by the atheiſts who attended him.

Whether Joab's flight to the altar was accompanied with a repentance, which entitled him to mercy, we cannot ſay; nor can we, in any caſe, determine the reſult of death-bed fears, relentings, confeſſions and prayers. The terrors of another world, opened to the near view of the guilty, may extort the language of repentance and faith, when there is no hatred of ſin and love of truth in the heart. Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteouſneſs, yet deſired to die the death of the righteous. The ſcripture often ſpeaks of the convictions and ſupplications of dying ſinners, as being of doubtful iſſue. "What is the hope of the hypocrite," ſays Job, "when God taketh away his ſoul? Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himſelf in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" "Becauſe I have called and ye refuſed," ſays wiſdom, "I alſo will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. They ſhall call, but I will not anſwer, becauſe they hated knowledge, and did not chooſe the fear of the Lord." There is, however, more hope for ſuch relenting ſinners, than for thoſe who die in obſtinate infidelity and unfeeling ſtupidity. For though remorſe is not repentance, yet there is no repentance without it. If the ſinner repents at all, he muſt firſt be awakened to conviction of, and ſelf-condemnation for his ſins.

The caſe, which we have been conſidering, affords as ſome uſeful inſtructions.

1. We have here the teſtimony of ſinners and

unbelievers to the truth and importance of religion.

Though they all deny its importance in practice, and many of them deny its truth in words, yet there are times, when, notwithſtanding all their prejudices and all their enmity againſt it, they declare in its favour, and ſhew a deſire to obtain a ſhare in its hopes and comforts. This teſtimony is of real weight; it deſerves much credit.

It is a teſtimony grounded on experience. They have made trial of irreligion, and they find, that this will not give them hope and comfort in the time, when they are moſt needed.

It is a teſtimony againſt themſelves: and ſurely it muſt be a ſtrong conviction, which conſtrains them to condemn their former avowed ſentiments, and their paſt manner of life.

It is a teſtimony given at a time, when they are moſt likely to judge rightly and to ſpeak honeſtly. It is given in a time of affliction, and in the near view of another world. If ever they will think ſoberly and juſtly on ſuch a ſubject, it muſt be now. The croud of worldly buſineſs, the diſtraction of earthly cares, the proſpect of temporal honours and riches, the ſeductions of irreligious company, the faſcination of ſenſual pleaſures are now over and likely to return no more. The luſts and paſſions, which uſed to hurry them along in their favorite purſuits, and blind them to the dangers before them, have now ſubſided. Pride, ambition, avarice and carnality have ceaſed to operate; for their objects are thrown out of ſight. New ſcenes open to their view. They are no more to return to this world; they are ſoon to enter on another. They ſtand between both, and look back on the one which they have paſſed, and forward on that which is before them. They ſee a mighty difference between them.

They feel, that to prepare them for the future world, other and better tempers are neceſſary, than thoſe which they have indulged here. They are convinced, that the paſſions, which have governed them, muſt be inconſiſtent with enjoyment in a world, where theſe paſſions will find no correſpondent objects. They know their deſtiny will ſoon be fixed, and this is no time to trifle. In ſuch a ſituation, it may be preſumed, they will judge more impartially, than in the buſtle of worldly ſcenes.

If men, who have deſpiſed religion in health and proſperity, do generally, or at leaſt frequently, deſire and ſeek its comforts, when they come into the ſituation now deſcribed, we muſt believe it to be true and important. If there were comfort to be found elſe where, men, who have lived in oppoſition to religion, would not reſort to it in this extremity. The controverſy between Chriſtians and infidels; between the godly and the profane concerning religion, is only in this life. It is terminated at death. The latter, in the near view of this momentous change, give up the diſpute, and, in their judgment, come over to the ſide of the former, and wiſh to find comfort in that, in which others have found it already. "Death is an honeſt hour, and faithful to its truſt."

There is, in the nature of man, a principle, which condemns his enmity to religion. Where is the man, but who would chooſe, that his children ſhould be pious? Where is the man, who would prefer to put his ſon or his daughter under the care of an infidel or libertine for an education? Where is the man, who was ever heard to glory in the wickedneſs, diſſipation and licentiouſneſs of thoſe, who were to inherit his ſubſtance, and to continue the remembrance of his name? Where

is the man, who, if he thought himſelf dying, would not recommend to his children a religious and blameleſs life? And where is the man, who, if he had loſt a virtuous ſon, would not take comfort in the character which he ſuſtained, and in the hopes which he left?—The conſciences of men witneſs within them, that religion is a reality; not a fiction—a ſolemn truth; not a trifle.

2. We ſee the wiſdom of an early and immediate attention to religion.

If even ungodly men deſire, at leaſt, to lay hold on the horns of the altar, and, when they ſee that they muſt die, wiſh to die there, then let every one fly to the altar now, and lay hold on the hope of mercy, which is there held up to him.

How much ſoever you deſpiſe religion now, the time is coming, when you will wiſh for a ſhare in its comforts. You perhaps can *live* indifferent to religion; but do you really think, you can *die* ſo? If others have been convinced of its importance, when they were dying, ſo probably will you; therefore attend to it now. You may then feel this conviction, and yet die in your guilt. It is not every kind of conviction, that produces repentance, and enſures perdon. And no conviction, is more doubtful in its iſſue, than that which is awakened by the *immediate* apprehenſion of death. With this conviction deſpair often mingles to defeat its efficacy. The teſtimony of dying ſinners to the truth and importance of religion, ſhould call your attention to it in this calm ſeaſon, when you are beſt able to underſtand the nature of it, and to prove by correſpondent fruits the ſincerity of your choice.

You have a better altar at which you may take refuge, than that to which Joab made his flight. That yielded no protection to the preſumptuous

ſinner. Joab fled thither ; but ſtill he muſt die. For you there is an altar, to which you can fly and find ſafety. The blood which Chriſt ſhed on the croſs, applied by faith, will cleanſe from all guilt——from the guilt of the greateſt ſins. "Through him all that believe are juſtified from all things, from which they could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes." He came to ſave the chief of ſinners, and through him "the mercy of God is unto all and upon all that believe, and there is no difference."

Are you convinced of your violation of God's law ? Do you hear its threatenings ? Do you perceive them pointed againſt you ? Do you feel your inſufficiency to expiate your guilt, and evade the divine ſentence ? What will you do ?—Lift up your eyes, and behold the altar, which God has erected—behold the ſacrifice which is offered there—It is the ſacrifice of God's own ſon, who bare your ſins in his body on the croſs, that you might live through him. He through the eternal ſpirit offered himſelf without ſpot to God ; and his blood can purge your conſcience from dead works, and deliver your ſouls from the wrath to come.

Liſten to the calls of the ſaviour ; "Look unto me, and be ye ſaved. Come to me, and ye ſhall find reſt to your ſouls." Hear the exhortations of his meſſengers ; "Repent and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted out, and times of refreſhing ſhall come from the preſence of the Lord. Repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance ; and ye ſhall receive the forgiveneſs of ſins, and an inheritance among them that are ſanctified. Attend to their argument ; "God is in Chriſt reconciling the world to himſelf not imputing their treſpaſſes, and he hath

committed to us the word of reconciliation. We are ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though God did beſeech you by us; we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled to God; for he hath made him to be ſin for us, who knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him."

You ſee what a glorious hope is ſet before you. Ariſe now, flee to the altar of atonement, and lay hold on eternal life.

3. You are here warned not to take any encouragement in a ſinful life from the confidence and ſecurity, in which ſome wicked men ſeem at preſent to live; for ſooner or later, theſe very men will condemn themſelves. Other wicked men have done ſo; and ſo will they, and ſo will you, if you live like them.

When you look round on the world of mankind, you ſee thouſands purſuing a courſe very different from that, which the goſpel preſcribes; and you can obſerve in them nothing, which indicates a diſtruſt of their own ſafety. If you converſe with them, you hear many of them juſtify their manner of life, and talk in terms of great indifference about a life of ſtrict religion. Some of theſe appear to be men of diſcernment in other matters; and you aſk, "why ſhould they not be capable of judging in matters of religion? If *they* ſuſpect no danger in their courſe, why ſhould *we?*" But this is a preſumptuous way of reaſoning and acting. Why judge you not of yourſelves what is right? Prove all things; hold faſt that which is good. Call no man your maſter on earth; for you have a maſter in heaven. Make not wicked men your guides, for however wiſe they may be in worldly matters, in the concerns of religion the god of this world has blinded their minds. But if you are diſpoſed to give

weight to their opinions, ſee what their opinions are, in ſeaſons when they are moſt likely to judge right. Obſerve how they feel, and hear what they ſay in the near views of another world. If they then condemn their own irreligious ſentiments and manners, be not you governed by them.

Perhaps you have never ſeen *theſe* men in that ſolemn ſituation. But others of the ſame character have been in it; and they diſcovered a ſenſe of the importance of religion. It is probable many of theſe will do the ſame. Never follow the example of thoſe, who you think, will condemn this very example in thoſe ſerious hours, when their judgment will be moſt impartial. Never purſue a courſe, which, you know, you muſt condemn, when you come to the end of it. The example of good men you may wiſely follow, for your own conſcience now approves it and they will approve it in the review. You have heard and read of many, who condemn their own ungodly life, as they were entering into another world: but you never heard or read of a man, who in that ſituation condemned a religious life, as what appeared fooliſh and vain, or as what gave him fear and anxiety. Many good men have died in fear; but their fear aroſe from a diſtruſt of their own hearts; not from a diſtruſt of religion. They never ſuſpected, that religion was a vain thing; much leſs that it was a dangerous thing; their only concern was, leſt they had not fully embraced it, and cordially yielded to its influence.

You ſee, then, where your intereſt and ſafety lie. They lie in the religion which the goſpel teaches. This is not a vain thing; it is your life.

The ſalvation of the ſoul is the one thing need-

ful. This is offered in the word of God, and the terms of it are there ſtated. It is by a compliance with the terms, that you are to ſecure the benefit. The terms are repentance of paſt ſins, application to the mercy of God through a dying ſaviour, and a life devoted to God in holy obedience. Thus only can you enjoy peace in life, hope in death and happineſs in eternity. In favour of ſuch a choice you have the teſtimony of good men, and of wicked men too; you have the teſtimony of the word of God, and of your own conſcience. Embrace now the pardon and ſalvation offered you; and truſt not in a flight to God's altar, when you ſee the avenger of your crimes cloſe at your heels, leſt when your guilty hands attempt to lay hold on the horns of the altar, you be taken thence, that you may die; or if you reſolve to periſh there, ſtill you periſh in all your guilt.

SERMON IX.

Nothing to be refuſed, when the Lord hath need.

A Communion Sermon.

MARK xi. 3.

And if any man ſay unto you, Why do ye this? Say ye, that the Lord hath need of him: and straitway he will ſend him hither.

OUR Lord, at the time of the Jewiſh paſſover, had determined to make his public entry into Jeruſalem, in the manner predicted by the prophet Zechariah; "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, behold, thy king cometh unto thee meek, and ſitting upon an aſs, and upon a colt the foal of an aſs."—"When therefore he was come nigh to Jeruſalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he ſent two of his diſciples, ſaying, "Go ye into the village over againſt you; and as ſoon as ye be entered into it, ye ſhall find a colt tied, whereon never man ſat; looſe him and bring him to me. And if any man ſay unto you, Why do ye this? Ye ſhall ſay, The Lord hath need of him. And ſtraitway he will ſend him." They went and found the colt tied by the door without, in a place where two ways met;

a place of public reſort. "And as they were looſing the colt, the owner," who was ſtanding by, "aſked them, "why looſe ye the colt? And they anſwered, The *Lord* hath need of him." The reaſon was ſufficient: the owner let him go.

It may ſeem, perhaps, that our Lord, on this occaſion, aſſumed, over people's property, a power, which he was not wont to exerciſe. He commanded his two diſciples to "looſe the colt and bring him." But it ſhould be conſidered, that at this time, Jeſus was about to make his public appearance as king of Zion; that in this character he was already received by the body of the people, and ſoon after recognized by the train which attended him, and by the citizens of Jeruſalem. In this character he was obeyed by the owner of the beaſt, with whom the reaſon aſſigned by the diſciples, *The Lord hath need of him*, carried an authority, which he felt no diſpoſition to diſpute, and pretended no right to oppoſe. As Jeſus now exhibited himſelf in the character of Zion's king, all who owned him as ſuch were bound to yield him every aſſiſtance, which the occaſion required.

Beſides; it is evident from the ſtory, that the diſciples were to take the colt only with the owner's conſent. As Jeſus knew the place where the beaſt was tied, ſo he knew that the owner would be preſent, would demand the reaſon of the diſciples' looſing him, would be ſatisfied with their anſwer, and would allow them to take him. Chriſt's telling them, that the owner of the beaſt would let him go, plainly imported, that the owner's conſent was their warrant to bring him.

What deſerves our particular notice in this ſtory, is the readineſs with which the man reſigned his beaſt, as ſoon he knew, the Lord had need of him. This was the only reaſon which Chriſt ſaw

fit to give, and with this the owner was perfectly satisfied.

Hence then we learn, that whatever we claim as ours, we should commit it to our Lord's disposal; and whenever we know he has need of it, we should resign it to his service.

Jesus Christ came into the world to erect a kingdom, and then return to his father. His kingdom is not of this world, but from heaven. It consists not in temporal honour, wealth and dominion; but in the advancement of truth, righteousness and happiness—in the recovery of sinners from ignorance and error, wickedness and guilt—in the spread and influence of his doctrines—in the increase of real converts to his religion, and in the salvation of our fallen race.

This work he began personally, when he was on earth, and has been still pursuing ever since his return to heaven. But in this work he chooses not to be alone; he requires the concurrence and assistance of his servants. And whatever they can do in subservience to his cause, in that he has need of them. In regard to himself personally he needs nothing; but in regard to the great and benevolent design which he is carrying on in the world, he has need of us. And in that, wherein he has need of us, we must be workers together with him.

Christ often has need of our *property;* and with this we are to honour him.

He has instituted a church on earth, and appointed ordinances for its edification and comfort. These ordinances are to be maintained and continued, not by miraculous, but by human means. The first introduction and establishment of his gospel was in an extraordinary way; but its *continuance*, in some measure, depends on the support

given it by thoſe who profeſs to be its friends. It will not be preſerved, as it was firſt introduced, by the power of miracles. It is now brought to us, and laid before us with evidences of its truth, and declarations of its importance; and if we will not receive it, when it is brought; or will not retain it, after we have received it, then it leaves us of courſe; for we put it from us, and judge ourſelves unworthy of it. Even in the time of our ſaviour and his apoſtles, the continuance of the goſpel among the people of any particular place, was ſuſpended on the condition of their making ſome decent proviſion for it.

When Chriſt ſent forth his apoſtles to preach the kingdom of God, he furniſhed them with ſupernatural powers, which he commanded them to employ in healing the ſick, raiſing the dead, and caſting out devils, that thus the divinity of their miſſion, and the truth of their doctrines might be demonſtrated. But it is obſervable, they never were inſtructed to ſupply their own wants—to procure food and raiment, by miracles, and thus to excuſe their hearers from the trouble and expenſe of maintaining them. To have made the goſpel ſo cheap, would have been to make it too contemptible. On the contrary, they were to go forth on their miſſion without purſe or ſcrip, without gold or ſilver, or even change of apparel, becauſe, as labourers in the ſervice of mankind, they were worthy of, and entitled to their hire. Though ſome of them, if not all, poſſeſſed conſiderable property of their own, they were not to carry it with them, or to depend upon it for ſupport in their miſſion, but to require their maintenance wholly from thoſe, on whom their labours were beſtowed. If in any place, whither they were ſent, they were not received with the

attention, and entertained with the hoſpitality due to their ſacred character, they were to retire with this ſolemn admonition and awful token of their maſter's diſpleaſure; "The duſt of your city, which cleaveth to us, we wipe off againſt you. But be ye ſure of this; the kingdom of God hath come nigh to you."

It is an eſtabliſhed law of Chriſt's kingdom, that "they who preach his goſpel, ſhall live by his goſpel." Whatever, therefore, is requiſite to the maintenance of his preached goſpel, to the accommodation of his inſtituted worſhip, and to the continuance of his appointed ordinances, that he hath need of, and that we are bound to render to him out of the goods which he has committed to us. Whatever we poſſeſs, it is the gift of providence. We receive it in truſt from our Lord. And we are to apply it to ſuch purpoſes as his general inſtructions warrant, and his particular occaſions demand. Thus when our ſtewardſhip ſhall ceaſe, we may give an account of it to his approbation and acceptance.

Our Lord has need of our property, not only for the maintenance of his worſhip, but alſo for the relief and comfort of his *helpleſs friends*.

Providence places men under different circumſtances, for this, doubtleſs, among other reaſons, that occaſion and opportunity may be given for the various ſocial virtues. While men are mutually dependent on, and reciprocally indebted to one another, the virtues of juſtice, fidelity, friendſhip, benevolence and gratitude are called into exerciſe, and thus the ſocial affections and pleaſures are improved and exalted.

The poor we have always with us. Theſe, acting under the influence of religion, may be as uſeful in ſociety as the rich. The latter may do good

by actions more brilliant and obſervable. The former do good by ſervices no leſs ſolid and ſubſtantial. The labours of the poor contribute, as eſſentially as the benefactions of the rich, to the general ſupport and happineſs of human life. Neither claſs, without the other, could comfortably ſubſiſt. "The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all."

God beſtows an abundance on ſome, not for their ſakes only, but alſo for the ſake of the poor who are with them. Hence the rich are charged to "be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, and thus to lay up for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come"—againſt the time, when, in the changes of human condition, it may be their turn to become poor; or againſt the time of general retribution, when every one will receive according to his works.

When we give to the poor, we lend to the Lord, who, in due time, will amply repay the loan. We are to do good to all, and eſpecially to them, who are of the houſehold of faith. The poor, whatever may be their character, are entitled to our charity, becauſe they are needy: the *virtuous* poor have the firſt claim, becauſe they are worthy. He who receives a righteous man, in that name and character, will receive a righteous man's reward. He who ſhall give to a diſciple of Chriſt a cup of cold water only, in the name of a diſciple, and becauſe he belongs to Chriſt, ſhall not loſe his reward. Whatever is done for ſuch, Chriſt accepts it as done for himſelf. If then we have this world's goods, and ſee a brother who has need, we are to conſider, that the Lord hath need of a part of theſe goods for that needy brother. If in this caſe we ſhut up

our bowels of compaſſion, the love of Chriſt dwells not in us. We then love him indeed, and in truth, when, at his call, we relieve the diſtreſſed, help the weak, and comfort the afflicted.

Chriſt has need of our *abilities* and *ſervices*, as well as of our ſubſtance, in carrying on his work on earth.

His cauſe requires, that we dedicate ourſelves to him, and openly profeſs our faith in him.

If there is need, that his church ſhould be continued and his religion maintained in the world, there is need that ſome ſhould enter into his church, and profeſs his religion. If none ſhould be added to the church, it muſt expire with the ſhort-lived beings who now belong to it. If the church ſhould be diſcontinued, the means of religion would be dropped and loſt, and religion itſelf ceaſe and be forgotten; or exiſt only here and there in the ſolitary breaſts of a few obſcure and deſpiſed mortals.

Now if Chriſt has need of ſome to honour and maintain his religion, then every one, who believes it to be divine, ſhould conſider, that the Lord hath need of *him*.

Among thoſe who have never publickly profeſſed their faith in the goſpel, there are many, I ſuppoſe, who believe it is true, and wiſh it may be preſerved for the general benefit of mankind. They could not, at once, reconcile themſelves to the thought, that the goſpel ſhould be extinguiſhed, and that thoſe who enjoy it ſhould degenerate into atheiſts, idolaters, pagans, or barbarians. They could not eaſily make themſelves willing, that their poſterity ſhould grow up among ſuch a horrible ſet of beings. Come forward, then, and join yourſelves to the Lord—declare your faith in him, and friendſhip to him; for he has need of

you. If he needs any profeſſors at all, why not you as much as others? You excuſe yourſelves on one pretence and another: but may not every man excuſe himſelf as well? Is there, in your caſe, any peculiar circumſtance, which exempts you from the common obligations of religion? If all ſhould excuſe themſelves, as you do, where would be the church—where would be the religion of Chriſt?

When religion declines—when profeſſors are few, and theſe few loſe the ardour of their zeal and love—when churches become like ſocieties of the world, then Chriſt has need of you to ſtrengthen the intereſt, and reſtore the honour of his cauſe among men.

You withdraw from the church, or refuſe to come into it, becauſe you ſee in it ſo little religion, and ſo many unworthy members. But if its real ſtate is ſuch as you apprehend, and you have ſo much more purity and zeal than others, then you are the very perſons whom the Lord needs to ſupport his languiſhing cauſe. Forſake not his church, when it is ſinking; but come forward; ſtrengthen it by your example, advice and prayers: come; help to ſuſtain it by your friendly concurrence with the few, who may perhaps be found as really concerned as you for its increaſe and glory.

Chriſt has need of ſome to preach his goſpel; and they who undertake this work, ſhould be influenced by a ſenſe, that the Lord hath need of them. Paul was influenced by this principle. He had better worldly proſpects in a ſecular calling; but in no other profeſſion could he do ſo much ſervice for Chriſt. In the proſecution of his miniſtry, he choſe to beſtow his labours, not where they would be moſt lucrative to himſelf, but where they would moſt conduce to the fur-

therance of the goſpel. He ſtrove to preach, not where Chriſt was named, leſt he ſhould build on another man's foundation; but where the goſpel had not been preached, or the miniſtry was not at that time enjoyed, that the word of ſalvation might be more extenſively ſpread. He would not go, where the Lord had no need of him; but where the ends of his apoſtleſhip might beſt be anſwered.

In times, when licentious opinions and corrupt manners prevail—when infidelity grows bold, and iniquity abounds, Chriſt has need of the active ſervices of his faithful miniſters and ſincere friends, who are then to ſtand up with courage againſt evil workers, and bear teſtimony againſt thoſe who make void his goſpel. At ſuch a time, if miniſters are to ſtand foremoſt, yet they are not to ſtand alone. All who regard the truth are to ſtrengthen and ſupport them. The zealous Levites, ſeeing the neceſſity of a reformation in the church of God, ſaid to Ezra, "Ariſe, for this matter belongeth to thee: we alſo will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it."

Warnings from a ſolitary voice have little effect; and never leſs, than in thoſe corrupt times, when the advocates for vice and error, by evil communications, and by the circulation of licentious writings, ſtrengthen the hands of evil doers. "Two are better than one; for if they fall, one will lift up his fellow." Chriſtians are to be fellow-helpers to the truth. Paul beſeeches the brethren, for the Lord Jeſus' ſake, that they ſtrive together with him.

Chriſt needs the ſervice of thoſe who are placed at the head of families.

The continuance and increaſe of his church depend on the faith and piety of the young and riſ-

ing generation, and consequently on the fidelity of parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Children will not be prompted, by natural inclination, to seek after knowledge and virtue. They need instructions to inform their minds, and exhortations to awaken their attention. The Lord of the church has committed their education to the care of their parents; he requires, and he needs their diligence and fidelity in the execution of this great charge. Ordinarily they may expect that their faithfulness will be followed with a blessing, but their negligence with a curse, on their children, as well as on themselves. They who are early trained up in the way in which they ought to go, will pursue it when they are old: but children left to themselves soon bring their souls to ruin, and their parents to shame. If there be need, that your children should seekand serve God in their early years, and pass through life with wisdom and virtue—if there be need, that they should become members of Christ's church, walk in his ordinances, and work out their own salvation—if there be need that they should take up his religion, and hand it on to a future generation, then he has need of you to instruct them in his religion, and to lead them along in the way which he has marked for them.

When family order is much neglected, he has more need of the services of the faithful to revive and restore it. If those around you treat with indifference so necessary a branch of religion, be not carried away by their example, but say to them, as Joshua said to the men of Israel, "If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose ye, this day, whom ye will serve: but, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

And, my young friends, let me tell you, The Lord hath need of *you;* for you may do much ſervice to his cauſe. You think, that he needs your fathers, your grandſires, and other elderly people; for their advice and example will have great influence in ſupporting his religion; and if they ſhould deſert his cauſe, it would ſoon ſink in the world, and the next generation would come forward indifferent to it, and unacquainted with it. But, my friends, you by your good example and pious converſation may have as much influence among your youthful aſſociates, as the aged can have, and perhaps more. Beſides; you ſhould conſider, that your fathers will ſoon be gone; and if there ſhould be no young Chriſtians to ſucceed them, where will be Chriſt's church then? The church, like the human race, muſt be continued by ſucceſſion, for it conſiſts of mortals. If none of you will join yourſelves to it, it muſt ceaſe when your fathers are dead. Come, then, give yourſelves to the Lord, and declare yourſelves for him, encourage your fellow youths to embrace and obey his religion. How much good may thus be done? Think not yourſelves uſeleſs and inſignificant beings. You are important in your place, and the Lord hath need of you. He never is better pleaſed, than when he ſees the young engaged in his cauſe, and hears them ſing, Hoſanna to the ſon of David. Out of their mouths he ordains praiſe.

Chriſt expects of his ſervants a ready compliance with his commands, and a cheerful reſignation of every thing, which he needs from them. When he ſent his diſciples to procure him a beaſt, on which he might make his entrance into Jeruſalem, he ſignified, that nothing more would be neceſſary, than to ſay, "The Lord hath need of

him." And so it was. On this information, the owner straitway let him go.

We should willingly serve the Lord with all our ability, and all our substance; for all that we are, and all that we have belong to him. When David had made a liberal offering for the honour of God's worship, he said, "Of thine own have we given thee: All this store that we have prepared cometh of thine hand: it is all thine own." "Who," says the apostle, "hath first given to the Lord? And it shall be recompensed to him again. For of him, and through him, and to him are all things." "Know ye not," says he, "that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are his."

If all our abilities are endowments from his creating power, and all our goods are the gifts of his bountiful providence, and all our graces are the fruits of his sanctifying spirit, then we are to employ them all in the promotion of his cause, and to the honour of his name. "By the grace of God," says saint Paul, "I am what I am, and his grace bestowed on me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me."

We are to do all for Christ that he needs from us; for he has done, and still is doing all for us, that we need from him. He has not been backward to promote our interest; we should not be reluctant to honour his name. He has given himself a ransom for us; in due time, when we were without strength, he died for us; he has sent his gospel to us for our instruction; he has opened a way for our access to the throne of God; he makes intercession for us, when we come to God in his name; he has procured the grace of the divine

ſpirit, which, on our humble application, he will vouchſafe for our ſeaſonable help. And ought we not to give ourſelves to him ; to employ our time and ſtrength, all the powers of our body, and faculties of our mind, all our ſubſtance, every thing that we have, in his ſervice, and to his glory ? Can we ever do enough for him, who has done and ſuffered ſo much for us ? " The love of Chriſt conſtraineth us," ſays the apoſtle, " becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead : and that he died for all, that we who live ſhould not henceforth live to ourſelves, but to him who died, and roſe again."

We are to render to Chriſt what he needs, becauſe we thus co-operate with him in the moſt friendly and benevolent deſign. The work which he is purſuing is of the greateſt utility to us and our race. The religion which he has taught, will, ſo far as it prevails, baniſh vice and miſery, and introduce virtue and happineſs. There is in it nothing unkind, malevolent or unſocial, but every thing good, beneficent and uſeful. It relieves the ſorrows, and heightens the enjoyments of this world where we now dwell ; and it prevents miſery and ſecures happineſs in that world to which we are going. What Chriſt requires of us is, that we obey the rules, and accept the bleſſings of this religion for ourſelves ; and that we ſupport the credit, and aſſiſt the influence of it among others—In a word, that we ſeek to be happy, and ſtudy to make others ſo. What can we do better ? If we ought to ſerve our generation, then let us ſerve our divine Lord in every thing which he needs from us; for all that he requires has ſome reſpect to this benevolent end, the general good.

We ſhould cheerfully give to him whatever he has need of, for thus we ſhall derive greater benefit from it, than by any other application which we can make of it.

If we cultivate the religion of Chriſt in our own hearts, we ſhall enjoy the peace and hope which ſpring from it here, and be entitled to the happineſs, which is the reward of it hereafter. If we promote this religion among others, we ſhall experience the ſatisfaction of dwelling in the midſt of juſt and good men—kind and friendly neighbours. If we train up our children in the knowledge and practice of this religion, we ſhall have the joy of ſeeing them wiſe, virtuous and uſeful on earth, and the ſuperior joy of believing, that they are entitled to a rich inheritance in heaven.

Every thing which we do for our Lord, will return to us bringing a reward with it.

When we give to Chriſt what he has need of, we are ſure it is well beſtowed. Our charities to men are ſometimes miſapplied. But our ſervices for Chriſt are not only well accepted by his goodneſs, but well directed by his wiſdom. He will ſmile on our labours in his cauſe, and make them, in ſome way or other, ſubſervient to his glory and our felicity. "Be ye therefore ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as ye know, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. Whatſoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that of the Lord ye ſhall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye ſerve the Lord Chriſt." This we ought to regard as a ſufficient motive to cheerful diligence in the work appointed us, that *we ſerve the Lord Chriſt.* "With good will do ſervice as to the Lord, knowing that whatſoever good thing any man doth, the ſame ſhall he receive of the Lord, for with him there is no reſpect of perſons. His word is ſure, his promiſe faithful, his reward glorious. None who ſerve him, will labour in vain.

SERMON X.

The Gate of Heaven ſtrait, and many ſhut out of it.

LUKE xiii. 24.

Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.

AS our Lord paſſed through ſeveral cities and villages of Judea, on his journey to Jeruſalem, teaching by the way, there attended him a conſiderable number of people, who, ſome for one reaſon, and ſome for another, gathered around him to hear his diſcourſes. Somewhere in his journey, a perſon came to him with this queſtion, "Lord, are there few that be ſaved?" From the queſtion and our Lord's anſwer it ſeems, that the man was a Jew, tinctured with the common national prejudice, that the Jews, by their covenant-relation to God, were entitled to ſalvation; but the gentiles, being ſtrangers to the covenant and aliens from the commonwealth of Iſrael, would be rejected. Often, no doubt, had he heard this doctrine aſſerted among his countrymen; and he wiſhed to know Chriſt's opinion upon it. As the queſtion related to the prevailing ſentiment of the day, Chriſt directed his anſwer to the body of the people who attended him. He firſt rebuked this

uſeleſs curioſity concerning the number of the ſaved, and called their attention to a matter, which was to them of more immediate conſequence. "Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate." "Whether few or many will finally obtain ſalvation, take care to ſecure your own ſhare in it; for this will not depend upon the number of the ſaved, but upon your own fervent and ſeaſonable application."

Chriſt here alludes to a cuſtom then obſerved in attending feaſts and marriages. The gueſts were early invited, and the door of the houſe was kept open, or opened occaſionally, for their reception; but when the bridegroom arrived with his attendants, or the maſter of the feaſt had waited the appointed time, the door was ſhut, and after this no more were admitted. Alluding to this uſage, Chriſt, in the parable of the virgins, ſays, "While the fooliſh virgins went to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then they who were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was ſhut. Afterward came thoſe fooliſh virgins, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open to us; but he anſwered, I know you not."

In the words which follow our text, Chriſt corrects that prejudice of the Jews, which gave riſe to the queſtion propoſed to him. He tells his hearers, that external privileges would intitle no man to ſalvation; that though the Jews enjoyed peculiar religious advantages, many of them would be excluded from the kingdom of heaven as workers of iniquity, while the gentiles, whom they deſpiſed, would come from all parts of the world, and be made the happy ſubjects of this kingdom. Though our Lord waves an anſwer to the queſtion, as it reſpected the whole number of the ſaved, yet he anſwered it, as it concerned the Jews, warning them that their general impenitence would be

their deſtruction, while the faith of multitudes among the gentiles would be their ſalvation.

When a queſtion of mere curioſity was ſtarted in our Lord's hearing, it was his uſual practice, to give it a religious turn, and raiſe from it ſome profitable reflections. This he did in the caſe before us. Taking occaſion from the queſtion propoſed to him, whether few would be ſaved; he exhorted his hearers to ſtrive for their own ſalvation; he ſhewed that many would fail of this object: he pointed out the cauſes of their failure: he explained the neceſſary qualifications for heaven; and he repreſented the awful condition of thoſe who ſhould finally be ſhut out of it.

The diſcourſe of our ſaviour on this ſolemn ſubject, which is contained in our text and the words following, I ſhall endeavour to illuſtrate and apply. It deſerves the attention of all; for it is as important now, as when it was firſt ſpoken, and as intereſting to us, as it was to thoſe who heard it from the redeemer's mouth. You will obſerve;

Firſt: The entrance into heaven is by a *ſtrait gate*. So our Lord deſcribes it in our text, and alſo in the VIIth chapter of Matthew, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth to life."

This metaphor is deſigned to expreſs the difficulties which attend a religious courſe, and the oppoſition which may be expected in the way to heaven. It may more immediately regard the peculiar difficulties of the time when the goſpel was firſt publiſhed. It was then eminently true, that through much tribulation the righteous entered into the kingdom of God; and they who would live godly in Chriſt Jeſus muſt ſuffer perſecution. The way to heaven was then rough and

dangerous; and they who purſued it, put their reputation, intereſt and life to hazard. Hence many were deterred from entering upon it; and many who had entered upon it, were diſcouraged and turned back.

Through the goodneſs of God, the path of religion is now free from thoſe dangers, which have at ſome times attended it; but ſtill ſtrait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads to life. There are, and there ever will be difficulties to encounter, and obſtructions to reſiſt; and therefore our Lord's direction is, at all times, important; "Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate."

1. The terms of eternal life are ſtrict and indiſpenſable. In this reſpect the gate of heaven is called ſtrait.

Such is the corrupt and depraved ſtate of mankind by nature, that nothing leſs than a new creation, is required to fit them for the pure and ſublime enjoyments of the heavenly world. So oppoſite is the holineſs of heaven to the corruption of nature, that this new creation, this renovation of the mind, cannot be diſpenſed with. Old things muſt paſs away, and all things muſt become new. The whole ſpirit, ſoul and body muſt be ſanctified. There muſt be a full perſuaſion of the truth and authority of the goſpel, an influential belief of its important doctrines, and a hearty ſubmiſſion to its ſacred precepts; there muſt be a deep ſenſe of, and godly ſorrow for ſin, and a humble application to, and reliance upon the mercy of God for pardon; there muſt be a temper to hate ſin in all its forms, and to love God in his complete character; there muſt be an actual renouncing of all known wickedneſs, and a deliberate choice of the ſervice of God as the great buſineſs of life. And in this courſe of obedience, the great motives of

the goſpel, taken from the future world, muſt have a principal influence. In renewed and ſanctified ſouls, a ſenſe of preſent infirmity and imperfection will excite a watchfulneſs over the thoughts, the paſſions, the language and conduct—a frequent examination of the temper and review of the life; a renewal of faith, repentance and ſelf-dedication; fervent prayer to God; diligent attendance on religious inſtitutions; and ardent aſpirations after growth and improvement in holineſs.

This is a brief view of the Chriſtian life, as exhibited in the goſpel. And it may properly be called "a ſtrait and a narrow way." And,

2. The way is ſtraitened by the oppoſitions which uſually are found in it. Though we are not called to reſiſt unto blood ſtriving againſt ſin, yet we have difficulties to contend with. There are difficulties which ariſe from an unhappy education; from frequent examples of vice; from the influence of ſenſible objects; from the diſtractions of earthly cares; from the ſcoffs and mockeries of profane and wicked men; from the temptations of evil ſpirits; from poverty or riches, or other peculiar circumſtances in life. With ſome or other of theſe difficulties every ſerious Chriſtian has many conflicts. To bear up againſt all this oppoſition; to be blameleſs and harmleſs in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation; to keep the mind and manners unſpotted from the world; to paſs uninfected through the contagion of corrupt examples, and to reſiſt the impreſſion of ſatan's temptations, it requires conſtant vigilance and ſtrong reſolution, accompanied with the ſupports of divine grace.

In theſe reſpects ſtrait is the gate, and they who enter, muſt ſtrive with earneſtneſs, and perſevere with patience.

It does not become us, however, to magnify

the difficulties of religion. It has its trials, and it has its encouragements too. We muſt view it in its ſmiling, as well as in its ſeverer aſpect. An apprehenſion of its difficulties is neceſſary, that we may be awakened from indolence to activity and engagedneſs; that we may form our reſolutions with knowledge and judgment, and that we may truſt in divine grace and not in our own ſtrength. But, on the other hand, we muſt contemplate it in its inviting circumſtances, that we may not be weary and faint in our minds; but may embrace it with cheerfulneſs, and cleave to it with fixed purpoſe of heart.

Let it then be conſidered;

That whatever difficulties there are in religion, they are not ſo great, but that by divine grace we may overcome them. We are not ſufficient of ourſelves to think any thing as of ourſelves: we are ſtrong only in the grace of God; and his grace is ſufficient for us—It is ſufficient to renew our hearts, ſubdue our corruptions, fortify us againſt temptations, and carry us through all the difficulties which are before us. When we conſider the weakneſs of our nature and the ſtraitneſs of the gate, we may well deſpair in ourſelves: but let us, at the ſame time, look to God, who can open to us an effectual door and carry us ſafely through. And in his power and grace let us take courage and preſs forward. As he has commanded us to ſtrive, we ſhall thus conform to his will and act agreeably to his pleaſure; and we may rely on his concurring influence.

It ought alſo to be conſidered, that the difficulties which attend religion lie chiefly within ourſelves. They ariſe from our love of ſin, our attachment to the world, and our averſion to God's commands. When, therefore, we are awakened

to a ſenſe of the danger of ſin, and the importance of religion, when our indolence is removed, and a ſerious ſolicitude for our ſalvation takes place, a great part of the difficulty is over. When we feel an engagedneſs of heart to obtain, and a full determination to ſtrive for heaven, the difficulties are proportionably abated. Duty is always more eaſy, as the zeal is more warm and active.

Let it, farther, be remembered, that as every good gift is from God, ſo his grace is to be acknowledged in thoſe convictions, awakenings and reſolutions, with which the religious life muſt ordinarily begin. And if theſe are from God, they who feel them may conclude, that God's ſpirit is working in them. And doubtleſs he is willing to carry on the work which he has begun. He will not break the bruiſed reed, nor quench the ſmoking flax. Hence the awakened and thoughtful have new encouragement from the preſent ſtate of their minds, to apply to God for all neceſſary ſupplies of grace. Whatever weakneſs they feel, let them wait on God, and be of good courage, and he will ſtrengthen their hearts.

Again: We ſhould conſider, that the difficulties of religion are chiefly at firſt. When the mind is habitually attempered to it, then its duties become pleaſant and eaſy. If it be hard to bring our ſtubborn necks under Chriſt's yoke, yet when we have taken it upon us, we ſhall find it lighter than we imagined, and lighter the longer we wear it. Difficulties, therefore, far from diſcouraging our hearts, ſhould rather animate our reſolution and warm our zeal.

Religion ordinarily requires no ſelf-denial greater, than what we cheerfully ſubmit to in our common worldly purſuits. Does not the huſbandman exerciſe more ſtrenuous labours; does not

the merchant maintain more conſtant vigilance—does not the ſeaman, or the ſoldier expoſe himſelf to far greater hardſhips and perils, for a little gain, than the goſpel impoſes on the Chriſtian as the means of obtaining heaven? With what alacrity the former, animated by the proſpect of temporal profit or honour, diſcharge the duties of their profeſſion! Why may not the latter, with glory and immortality in view, as patiently and pleaſantly continue in well-doing? In our worldly occupations ſucceſs repays our ſelf denials. More amply will the ſelf-denials, watchings and ſtrivings of the Chriſtian be remunerated by his conqueſts over ſin and the world, by his improvements in virtue and holineſs, by the increaſe of his ſpiritual hopes, and by the happineſs which awaits him in heaven.

This was our firſt obſervation, that on account of the ſtraitneſs of the gate, we muſt ſtrive to enter into life.

We proceed to obſerve;

Secondly: That many will fail of entering in at this gate. "Many will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able."

What the proportion of the ſaved will be, the ſcripture has not told us. There are ſome paſſages, which repreſent the number as very great. John, in his viſion, ſaw twelve thouſands ſealed out of each of the tribes of Iſrael; and, beſides theſe, a great multitude which no man could number, ſtanding before the throne of God, and clothed in white robes: and yet all theſe were only ſuch as came out of great tribulation. In the words following the text, our Lord ſays, "They ſhall come from the eaſt and from the weſt and from the north and from the ſouth, and ſhall ſit down in the kingdom of God." But, on the other

hand, there are ſome paſſages, which give us a ſad repreſentation of the number of the miſerable. Our ſaviour tells us, that among thoſe who ſeek to enter in at the ſtrait gate, there are *many* who will not be able—that *many* will go in at the broad gate, which leads to deſtruction—that *many*, at the laſt day, will ſeek admiſſion into his kingdom, whom he will reject as workers of iniquity. Theſe paſſages, however, expreſs the *abſolute*, rather than the comparative number of the miſerable. There are other texts, which ſeem to repreſent the number of the happy as ſmall in a comparative view. Our ſaviour ſays, "*Many* are called, but *few* are choſen." "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth to life, and *few* there be who find it. Broad is the gate which leadeth to deſtruction, and *many* there be, who go in thereat." But theſe expreſſions may be ſuppoſed rather to reſpect the ſtate of mankind in particular places and at particular times, than their general ſtate in all ages. Of the Jewiſh nation in the days of Chriſt and his apoſtles, it was eminently true, that few found the way to life; and though they were generally called, few obeyed. "The gentiles, who had not followed after righteouſneſs, attained unto righteouſneſs, even the righteouſneſs which is of faith; but Iſrael who followed after the law of righteouſneſs, attained not to it, becauſe they ſought it not by faith, but by the deeds of the law." Hence the apoſtle applies to them what God ſpake of their fathers by the prophet, "I have reſerved to myſelf ſeven thouſand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal:" "Even ſo alſo, at this preſent time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

However, if we conſider, how great a part of the world, as far as hiſtory affords us light, have

in all ages been ſunk in ignorance, ſuperſtition and vice—how great a number of thoſe who profeſs the true religion, have corrupted its purity—how many of thoſe who retain the knowledge of the truth, are wholly uninfluenced by it; we ſhall have but a melancholly view of mankind; and ſhall ſee reaſon to fear, that the alarming words of our ſaviour already mentioned, have been applicable to moſt periods, and remain applicable to our own times.

Amidſt our gloomy apprehenſions, it is no ſmall conſolation to believe, that there is a day coming, when the goſpel will have a more extenſive ſpread in the world, and a more powerful influence on the hearts of men. And if we take into the eſtimate this happy period of the church, which the ſcripture promiſes, and which, it ſeems, will be of long duration, perhaps the whole number of the ſaved will far exceed the number of thoſe who are loſt.

But whether the number be comparatively great or ſmall, let each one attend to himſelf, and work out his own ſalvation with fear and trembling. The terms of ſalvation are the ſame, whether thoſe who comply with them be many or few. The number of the ſaved, be it ever ſo great, will be no ſecurity to thoſe who neglect their ſalvation; be it ever ſo ſmall, it will not endanger thoſe who repent and obey the goſpel. The duty, which alike concerns us all, our ſaviour has pointed out in our text; "Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate, for many will ſeek to enter in and ſhall not be able."

If there are many who will be loſt, let each one fear for himſelf, leſt he ſhould be found in that unhappy number. The apoſtle ſpeaks of ſome who could not enter into God's reſt becauſe

of unbelief. "Therefore," ſays he, "let us alſo fear, leſt, a promiſe being left us of entering into this reſt, any of us ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it." Our danger does not ariſe from the number which will periſh, but from our own unbelief and impenitence. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation; and how to reſerve the unjuſt unto the day of judgment to be puniſhed." But ſtill the warnings which the ſcripture has given us, that there will be found, at the laſt day, many workers of iniquity, who will be caſt into utter darkneſs, ſhould fill every ſoul with a deep ſolicitude for himſelf, and awaken in him an immediate care to flee from the wrath to come. For this purpoſe the ſcripture has announced them to us: and to this purpoſe we ſhould apply them.

When Chriſt admoniſhed his diſciples, that one of them would betray him, and prove a ſon of perdition, each enquired, Lord, is it I? When he alſo admoniſhes us, that many will be rejected as workers of iniquity, let us all make the ſame perſonal application—the ſame home-felt enquiry. To judge whether we are involved in this danger, we need not go far; we need not attempt an inveſtigation of the ſecret purpoſes of God; we are only to ſearch and examine ourſelves. If ſin reigns within us, the wrath of God abides on us. If we have renounced the dominion of ſin, we are delivered from the wrath to come.

It is the decree of God, that they who do his commandments ſhall enter through the gates into the heavenly city; but whoſoever defile themſelves and work abomination ſhall be ſhut out, and caſt into utter darkneſs. This is the only decree, in which the preſent enquiry is concerned—the only decree by which we can judge of our danger, or

ſafety. This is not a ſecret, but a revealed decree. By this let us govern our conduct. On this let us ground our hopes, or our fears, according as we find our character. God will not depart from it; for he is of one mind; none can turn him. We cannot alter it, for it is founded in the nature of God. The change muſt be in us. Let us by faith embrace the promiſe of God, and by repentance renounce the practice of ſin, and thus giving all diligence, add to our faith all the virtues and works of the goſpel; in this progreſs we ſhall make our calling and election ſure, and ſhall never fall, but an entrance will be miniſtred to us abundantly into the kingdom of Chriſt.

SERMON XI.

The Cauſes, why many who ſeek, cannot enter at the ſtrait Gate.

LUKE xiii. 24.

Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.

THE entrance into heaven is here repreſented as a ſtrait gate. It is ſo called, becauſe the terms of admiſſion are ſtrict and indiſpenſable; and in the way thither much oppoſition is to be expected.

Our Lord warns us, that there are many, who will fail of entering in at this gate. Hence he commands us to ſtrive for an entrance, leſt we be found among the unhappy number, which ſhall be excluded.

Theſe obſervations have, in a former diſcourſe, been illuſtrated and applied.

We now proceed to obſerve,

Thirdly: Our ſaviour, for our caution, points out the *cauſes*, why many will not enter in at the ſtrait gate. Theſe are *negligence*, *dilatorineſs* and *falſe dependence*.

1. One cauſe, why many fail of ſalvation, is *negligence*. "*Strive*," ſays our Lord, "for many

will *ſeek* to enter, and ſhall not be able. *Seeking* is a word often uſed to expreſs the whole condition of ſalvation : but here it is uſed in a lower ſenſe, and in diſtinction from *ſtriving*.

The latter is a word, which imports the greateſt earneſtneſs—the moſt vigorous exertion, like that which combatants uſe, when they are contending for the maſtery. There is a promiſe of eternal life to them who ſeek it ; but it is only to them who ſeek it firſt, and in preference to all earthly intereſts—to them who ſeek it diligently, and by a patient continuance in well-doing—to them who ſeek it betimes, and while it may be found. *This ſeeking* is the ſame as *ſtriving*. There is a careleſs kind of ſeeking, which will not be ſucceſsful. Our ſaviour ſpeaks of ſome, who ſhall ſeek him, and yet ſhall die in their ſins—of ſome who ſeek him, not for the ſpiritual bleſſings which he beſtows, but for inferior ends. If they ſeek the kingdom of heaven, yet they firſt ſeek what they ſhall eat and drink.

Under the light of revelation, it is probable, there are few, but who have an intention to obtain heaven. Depraved as human nature is, few are ſo abandoned to ſtupidity—ſo loſt to the ſentiments of happineſs and miſery, as to feel no impreſſion from the terrors of the world to come. To dwell with devouring fire, with everlaſting burnings is ſo tremendous a thought, that even careleſs ſinners are ſometimes afraid. They wiſh to eſcape the awful ſcene, which the goſpel opens to their view. In their ſerious hours they form ſome purpoſes of repentance, they make ſome addreſſes to the God of mercy, and they think of turning to a virtuous life. But their reſolutions, prayers and endeavors are faint, tranſient and ineffectual. If they may be ſaid to *ſeek* heaven ; yet they

do not *ſtrive* for it, with that engagedneſs of heart, that conſtancy of reſolution, that perſeverance of application, with which combatants contend for victory, or with which men ordinarily purſue their worldly ends. If they ſeek, yet they ſeek not firſt the kingdom of God. If they attend at all to the care of their ſouls, yet they attend not to it as the one thing needful. There is no reaſon to think, that ſuch a ſeeking as this, will avail. The goſpel injoins a different kind of ſeeking. "Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate." "So run that ye may obtain." "Labour not for the meat which periſhes, but for that which endures to everlaſting life." "The kingdom of heaven ſuffers violence, and the violent take it by force—they preſs into it." This is the ſeeking which God requires, and in no other way can we promiſe ourſelves ſucceſs.

The object in view is ſo great, that our prayers to obtain it cannot be too importunate—our labours to ſecure it cannot be too earneſt, conſtant and perſevering.

We need not fear, that we ſhall ſtrive with too much engagedneſs. But we muſt be careful that we place not a wrong kind of dependance on our ſtriving. We may hope for ſucceſs, when we ſeek with earneſtneſs and diligence, becauſe God has required us thus to ſeek. But ſtill we muſt remember that we are unworthy creatures—that our ſins have forfeited every bleſſing—that whatever good we obtain, it is a gift of grace—that we have no claim on God's juſtice in virtue of any thing we have done, nor any claim on his promiſe, till we have actually complied with the terms of it; and, that as long as we remain impenitent, we are expoſed to the condemnation of God's law, whatever pains to eſcape it we have

taken. We are to ſtrive earneſtly, but humbly; we are to rely not on the value of what we have done to obtain ſalvation, but on the grace of God, who has offered ſalvation to us, awakened our deſires to ſecure it, and excited our diligence in ſeeking it.

If we indulge the proud thought, that God would be unjuſt and cruel, to deny us ſalvation after we have done ſo much in the buſineſs—or that he is unkind to keep us ſo long in fear and ſuſpenſe, when we have been ſo importunate for the aſſurance of hope—or that he is partial in withholding from us thoſe comforts and joys, which others have obtained in a ſhorter time and with leſs pains; we then turn our ſtrivings into a vain and offenſive ſelf-righteouſneſs; we diſhonour God, and defeat the otherwiſe hopeful ſucceſs of our endeavours; we diſcover the ſame haughty and impatient ſpirit, which God condemns in ſome ancient hypocrites. "Your words have been ſtout againſt me—Ye have ſaid, It is vain to ſerve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hoſts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they who tempt God are even delivered."

2. Another cauſe why many will not be able to enter, is *dilatorineſs*. "*Strive*," ſays our Lord, ſtrive *now*, "for many *will* ſeek," will ſeek *hereafter*, and "ſhall not be able to come in."

But why ſhall they not be able? Becauſe the door will then be ſhut. Thus it is added, "when once the maſter of the houſe has riſen up and has ſhut to the door; and ye begin to ſtand without, and to knock at the door, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open to us; then ſhall he ſay unto you, I know you not whence ye are." You will here obſerve,

for it is worthy to be obſerved for your encouragement as well as for your caution, that Chriſt does not ſay, "Strive, for many who *now* ſtrive, will fail." But "ſtrive, for many *will*, at another day, ſeek to enter, and ſhall not be able." Here is no intimation, that your *preſent* ſtriving is of doubtful ſucceſs: but a ſolemn warning, that there will be a *future* ſeeking, which ſhall be unavailing.

There are few, I believe, who entirely give up the purpoſes of religion. Though they feel a preſent diſinclination, or indifference to it, they have a ſecret deſign to engage in it by and by. They know they muſt die; and they cannot but ſuſpect, at leaſt, that there is ſomething ſerious and important to follow after death. For ſo great and certain an event as death they wiſh to be prepared. They, however, ſee no reaſon to conclude, but that they may live ſome years longer: or, if death ſhould come ſooner than they expect, they hope it will make a gradual approach and give them ſome warning; ſo that they may at laſt reſort to the refuge of a death-bed repentance. Thus raſhly preſuming on a future opportunity, they delay to ſecure an entrance, until the door is ſhut. Then they will cry for admiſſion; but, alas! they will cry in vain. "In that day, many will ſay to Chriſt, Lord, Lord, open to us; but he will anſwer, I know you not."

By the day here mentioned may be intended the day of final judgment, when all muſt appear before Chriſt to receive according to the deeds done in the body; or the day of death, when conſcious ſinners feel themſelves going to the awful preſence of their judge. The latter will be an event as deciſive as the former. This will terminate their probation, and fix their eternal condi-

tion. In this extremity many, who deſpiſed the voice of mercy, while it pleaded with them, will plead in vain for that mercy which they have deſpiſed. "When diſtreſs and anguiſh come upon them; then," ſays wiſdom, "ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me, but ſhall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not chooſe the fear of the Lord."

We will not, indeed, preſume to ſay, what the mercy of God may do for ſinners. We hope, it may arreſt and deliver ſome in the lateſt period of a guilty life. But if we conſider, that the death-bed confeſſions and prayers of the guilty uſually proceed from the terrors of impending deſtruction, rather than from a calm and ſober ſenſe of ſin; that their repentance, in ſuch a ſituation, is ordinarily attended with much perplexity of mind, and confuſion of thought; that there is a moſt criminal abuſe of God's mercy and patience in delaying repentance to ſo late and unſeaſonable a time; that promiſing appearances made in ſickneſs are often diſſipated by returning health; that the powers of the mind, in ſuch a condition, are very uncertain; that ſtupidity on the one hand, or deſpair on the other, may incapacitate ſinners for any religious exerciſes, and that the ſuddenneſs of their death may prevent the application of this intended remedy; we muſt ſee that the leaſt confidence in it is the madneſs of preſumption. They may not have an opportunity, or a capacity to cry for mercy, when death comes, or they may cry and not be heard. Or, if *dying* prayers may be accepted; yet this is certain, death will eternally ſeal the guilt and fix the doom of thoſe who die impenitent in their ſins, and no entreaties will, after that, be regarded. The workers of iniquity muſt go away into everlaſting puniſhment. They

who will not come to the throne of grace for pardon, will find no grace at the throne of juſtice.

3. *Falſe dependences* are another cauſe of the deſtruction of ſinners. "Many will ſtand without and knock at the door, ſaying, Lord, open to us; and he ſhall anſwer, I know you not, whence ye are. Then ſhall they begin to ſay, We have eaten and drunk in thy preſence, and thou haſt taught in our ſtreets. But he ſhall ſay, I tell you, I know you not; depart from me."

Theſe words of our ſaviour are deſigned to ſhew, how much dependance many will place on their profeſſed relation to Chriſt, their enjoyment of ſpiritual privileges, and their attendance on inſtituted ordinances. Such confidence will they have in theſe things, that they will hardly be undeceived, when they find themſelves in another world. But this confidence, ſtrong as it is, will utterly fail them. Chriſt will ſay to them, "I know you not."

As long as men ſatisfy themſelves with a looſe, partial, careleſs religion, they will not ſtrive to enter heaven by the ſtrait gate, for they hope to enter by a wide gate—they will not ſubmit to the ſtrict terms of the goſpel, for they have propoſed to themſelves eaſier terms. If they truſt in their profeſſion, their privileges, their obſervance of ordinances, their performance of external duties, their freedom from groſs vices, or any thing ſhort of the religion of the goſpel, they will reject, as impertinent to *their* caſe, this command of Chriſt, "Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate," becauſe they imagine, they have ſecured an entrance by a freer paſſage.

Be careful, then, that you form juſt conceptions of the nature of religion—that you gain an acquaintance with your own hearts—and that you

build your hopes on the foundation of God's word. Be perſuaded to make religion a ſerious buſineſs, and to ſtrive for an entrance at the ſtrait gate; for this is the only paſſage into the kingdom of heaven. Wait not until the door is ſhut. Delay not at all, for you know not when the door will be ſhut. Aſk and knock, while mercy ſtands at the gate to invite you in, and to tell you that ſtill there is room. Hear her voice while it is called to day, and harden not your hearts. Know the things of your peace in this your day, leſt they be hidden from your eyes. Behold, now is the day of ſalvation. If you neglect this great ſalvation, how will you eſcape?

Fourthly. The next thing which falls under our conſideration, is the *character* of thoſe whom our Lord will reject, and of thoſe whom he will admit, at the laſt day. "I tell you I know you not—depart from me all workers of iniquity." The reverſe of this is the character of thoſe whom he will receive: they are workers of righteouſneſs. So he inſtructs us. "Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my father, who is in heaven."

You will obſerve, that thoſe whom Chriſt excludes from his kingdom are *workers* of iniquity. Sin is their *work*, their *buſineſs*, their *delight*.

Good men often fall into particular acts of ſin, but they are not *workers* of it, or ſervants to it to obey it in the luſts thereof. They may be overtaken with it, when they, in general, flee from it; but they do not purſue it with a deſire to overtake and embrace it. In this ſenſe John ſays, "He that is born of God doth not commit ſin, for his ſeed remaineth in him, and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of God." There is in him a

principle which oppoſes ſin. He does not commit or practiſe ſin as a ſervant of it; but he watches againſt it, ſhuns the known temptations to it, abſtains from the appearance of it; and, whenever he is drawn into it, he reflects upon it with humiliation for it, with repentance of it, with prayers for grace to preſerve him from it, and with reſolutions to keep himſelf. Thoſe imperfections and miſcarriages, which are not allowed and indulged, but are ſoon followed with penitent reflections and humble reſolutions, do not denominate us *workers* of iniquity, and will not exclude us from the kingdom of Chriſt; for theſe are not inconſiſtent with a principle of faith and holineſs in the heart; but are incident to ſanctified ſouls in this imperfect ſtate. They are the works of that law in the members, which wars againſt the law of the mind.

We may farther obſerve, that *all* workers of iniquity will be condemned. Not one habitual ſinner—not one, who knowingly lives in wickedneſs, and finally dies in impenitence, will be admitted into heaven. It is not merely this or that ſin; but it is any and every ſin indulged and allowed, which ſhuts the door againſt men. You think, perhaps, that you ſhall enter in at the gate, becauſe you are not a drunkard, an extortioner, a thief, a liar. But remember, other vicious characters are excluded as well as theſe. If there be any one kind of iniquity, which you love and practice, and which you refuſe to renounce, there is no place in heaven for you; for nothing enters there which defiles or works abomination.—"Know ye not," ſays the apoſtle, "that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor thieves,

nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God." You will obſerve, the apoſtle does not ſay, that the man in whom *all* theſe vicious characters meet, but the man to whom *any one* of them belongs, will be excluded from the kingdom of glory. If there be any one ſin, which you cheriſh and retain, your ſouls are guilty and defiled; and before you can enter into heaven, you muſt be waſhed, juſtified and ſanctified in the name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the ſpirit of God. Saint John ſays, "They who do God's commandments," they who have reſpect to them all without reſerve, "ſhall enter through the gates into the city; for without are dogs, and ſorcerers, and adulterers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whatſoever loveth and maketh a lie."

You ſee, then, that, whatever duties you ſeem to perform, and whatever qualifications, you think, you poſſeſs; if you be not new creatures—if you have not the love of God in your hearts; but ſtill retain ſome known wickedneſs, ſome favorite luſt; you cannot enter through the ſtrait gate.

Though you make a good profeſſion, yet if your hearts and lives be not conformed to it,—though you call Chriſt your Lord, yet if you do not the things which he ſays, he will diſown you as none of his. "Behold, thou art called a Jew," ſays the apoſtle, "and reſteſt in the law, and makeſt thy boaſt of God—circumciſion verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumciſion is become uncircumciſion. For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumciſion which is outward in the fleſh; but he is a Jew, who is one inwardly, and circumciſion is that of the heart, in

the ſpirit, and not in the letter, whoſe praiſe is not of men, but of God."

The higheſt attainments in knowledge will not avail to your acceptance, without a correſpondent temper and practice. Though you hear Chriſt teaching in your ſtreets, as well as in his own houſe, and attend upon his inſtructions both in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon; yet if you regard not the things which he ſays, he will profeſs unto you, that he never knew you. They who hear his ſayings and do them not, are like a man, who builds his houſe on the ſand. They only are bleſſed, who hear his word and keep it. Though you have all knowledge, and underſtand all myſteries, yet without charity, you are nothing.

Farther; Though you ſhould be greatly awakened in hearing the word, and ſhould feel pungent convictions of ſin and ſtrong terrors from the repreſentations of hell and judgment; yet if theſe ſenſations die away, and leave your hearts unchanged, and your lives unreformed, you have no claim to heaven. When Paul reaſoned of righteouſneſs, temperance and the judgment to come, Felix trembled. But he ſoon diſmiſſed the ſolemn ſubject for the preſent; and we do not learn, that he ever reſumed it. Judas felt the anguiſh and horror of guilt; but he remained a ſon of perdition, and is gone to his place.

Yea; though you ſhould not only be alarmed by the threatenings, but alſo comforted by the promiſes of the goſpel; yet if there be not an abiding conformity to its holy precepts, your guilt remains. We read of ſome, who not only hear the word, but receive it with joy, and yet have no root in themſelves. Theſe, in a time of temptation, fall away. They are like ſtony ground, in which the ſeed ſown ſprings up ſpeedily; but becauſe it has no root, it withers and dies.

However ſtrict and regular you are in your attendance on the duties of devotion and the ordinances of Chriſt, if your hearts be not devoted to him, your claims to heaven will be rejected. There are ſome who eat and drink in his preſence, and ſtill remain workers of iniquity. In Chriſt neither circumciſion, nor uncircumciſion availeth any thing, but a new creature. Devotional duties are highly important as the means of holineſs, but if you ſubſtitute them in the place of holineſs, and make the whole of your religion to conſiſt in them, they then become unprofitable and vain.

And, finally, whatever you do in religion, if you be not influenced by the motives which the goſpel propoſes to you—motives taken from the character of God, and your relation to him—from the things which he has done for you, and the glorious hopes which he has ſet before you—if inſtead of theſe motives, you admit only thoſe which reſpect the preſent world; your religion is but external; it has no place in the heart, and will not be accepted of that holy being, who requires truth in the inward parts.

As we have violated the purity, and incurred the penalty of the divine law, we muſt know, that our preſent repentance and future obedience cannot be the *ground* of our pardon here, nor of our happineſs hereafter. This muſt be the free mercy of God, which he exerciſes toward ſinners through the ſacrifice of Jeſus Chriſt. We are never to conſider any thing which we do as having the leaſt degree of meritorious influence in procuring our ſalvation; but we are to aſcribe this, in every ſtage of its progreſs, to the grace of God in the redeemer.

Perſonal holineſs, however, is a neceſſary qual-

ification for heaven, for without it we are incapable of the ſpiritual felicity there to be enjoyed.

Our works of righteouſneſs are neceſſary fruits of that repentance and faith by which we become intereſted in the purchaſed and promiſed ſalvation. Whatever pretenſions we may make to ſorrow for ſin, and reliance on the Saviour, if ſtill we are workers of iniquity, we never have ſorrowed after a godly ſort, nor believed to the ſaving of the ſoul.

Beſides; as the publick proceſs of the laſt day is deſigned to be a revelation of the righteous judgment of God; therefore our works will be the matter of the final enquiry, and on theſe the judgment will proceed, for theſe only are viſible to others. Hence it is ſaid, that "God will judge the world in righteouſneſs, and render to every man according to his *works*; and according to the *deeds* done in the body; and every man ſhall receive according to that he hath *done*, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

We ſee, then, what is neceſſary to our finding admiſſion into heaven through the ſtrait gate. We muſt renounce ſin with godly ſorrow, repair to the ſaviour with humble faith in his righteouſneſs, yield ourſelves to God to ſerve him in new obedience, reſolve, in reliance on his grace, to depart from *all* iniquity, and conform to the *whole* will of God, and in hope of eternal life which God has promiſed, patiently continue in well-doing, and be faithful to the death. Thus we ſhall receive the crown of life.

SERMON XII.

The awful Condition of thoſe who ſhall be excluded from the kingdom of Heaven.

LUKE xiii. 24.

Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.

FROM theſe words we have obſerved,

That our entrance into heaven is by a *ſtrait gate* —that there are *many*, who will *fail* of entering in at this gate—that the cauſes of their miſcarriage will be *negligence*, *delay*, and *falſe dependence* —That the character of ſuch as will be excluded is *workers of iniquity*.

Theſe obſervations have already been illuſtrated.

We will now,

Fifthly; attend to the repreſentation, which our Lord makes of the awful condition of thoſe who ſhall be excluded from his heavenly kingdom.

When we attend to this repreſentation, it would be well, that we ſhould conſider it as a ſerious reality, not a fanciful fiction. As it is made by the ſon of God himſelf, who came to be our teacher, and who is appointed to be our judge, we may be aſſured, that it was intended, not for our amuſement, but for our warning.

1. He warns us, that impenitent ſinners at the laſt day, will be ſorely diſappointed—will meet with a doom, which they little expected, and which they did not really believe, though it had been declared to them.

When the door is ſhut, "they will ſtand without, and knock at the door, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open to us: but he ſhall ſay, I know you not, whence ye are. Then ſhall they begin to ſay, We have eaten and drunk in thy preſence, and thou haſt taught in our ſtreets; but he ſhall anſwer them, I tell you, I know you not; depart from me, all workers of iniquity." Such a bold confidence will many carry with them, that they will dare to repeat their application and urge their claim for admittance, even after denial. When they receive the repulſe, they will hardly believe it is given in earneſt.

It is probable, that there are few in this world, who ſeriouſly think, they are in much danger of miſery in another. Can it be imagined, that, under ſuch an apprehenſion, men would poſſeſs that caſe and tranquillity, and purſue the pleaſures and intereſts of the world with that avidity and conſtancy, which are generally to be ſeen? The unconcernedneſs with reſpect to things of futurity, and the engagedneſs with reſpect to things of time, every where ſo apparent, are ſtrong indications, either that men in general do not believe a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, or that they ſeldom think of it with any degree of attention, or that they flatter themſelves with the idea of a preſent title to, or with the hope of a future preparation for happineſs in the world to come. When therefore they arrive to that world, and find the reality of thoſe things which once they diſbelieved, and the importance of thoſe things

which they never laid to heart ; or perceive that the hopes on which they lived were all deluſive, and the preſumptions which they entertained were raſh and unfounded ; what aſtoniſhment and confuſion will overwhelm them ? Even in the preſent life, nothing is more painful, than the diſappointment of high wrought hopes. The loſs of any temporal good is more ſeverely felt in proportion to the confidence which we placed in it. A calamity, which we could have borne with patience, if we had foreſeen its approach, is inſupportable when it comes by ſurprize. What amazement, then, will ſeize—what anguiſh will wring the hearts of preſumptuous, deluded and unthinking ſinners, when they find themſelves, contrary to all their expectations, ſhut out of heaven, and conſigned to eternal darkneſs.

Sinners of every deſcription will meet with an unexpected fate. Infidels, who ſaid in their hearts, there is no God—no judgment—no future puniſhment, will now ſee, that there is a righteous and a holy God able to judge and condemn them, and a place of awful puniſhment prepared to receive them—they will now ſee, that the goſpel, which they deſpiſed as a fiction, is the revelation of God ; and that the ſolemn doctrines, which they treated as idle tales, are words of truth and ſoberneſs. They now can be infidels no longer : they believe and tremble.

They who preſuming on the mercy of God, emboldened themſelves to commit iniquity, will ſee, that he is juſt and holy, as well as kind and gracious ; that as he is abundant in goodneſs, ſo he will by no means clear the guilty.

The negligent and dilatory, who grounded their hopes on future opportunities of repentance ; and, becauſe ſentence againſt their evil works

was not executed ſpeedily, encouraged their hearts to continue in impenitence, theſe will ſee, that God is not to be mocked——that he will not always bear the inſolence and ingratitude of thoſe who dare to trifle with his forbearance.

The ſecure and thoughtleſs will now be awakened from their ſtupidity by that wrath which comes upon them ſuddenly, while they promiſed themſelves peace and ſafety.

Confident hypocrites will now hear their claims rejected and their reaſonings confounded; and while they are but beginning to urge their vain pleas, their mouths will be ſtopped.

How cautious ſhould we be, that we create not to ourſelves a falſe peace by indulging ſelf flattery, vain pride, raſh preſumption, or thoughtleſs ſtupidity? We thus not only lay an obſtruction in the way of our repentance, but render our condemnation more intolerable.

2. The miſery of impenitent ſinners will be greatly aggravated by the remembrance of paſt opportunities to obtain ſalvation.

When our Lord ſays, "The maſter of the houſe will ſhut to the door," he ſignifies, that there is a time, when the door is open. The cries, which he puts into the mouths of the excluded, "Lord, Lord, open to us", import, how deſirous they will be of admiſſion, after it is too late.

My friends, the great king has prepared a banquet; his fatlings are killed—his wine is mingled —his table is furniſhed—all things are ready. You are among thoſe who are invited. You have been, and ſtill are called to be his gueſts. The door of his houſe is now open, and to you he repeats his calls; "Whoſo is ſimple, let him turn in hither; and whoſo wanteth underſtanding, let him come, and eat of my bread, and drink of the

wine which I have mingled. Let him forſake the fooliſh and live, and go in the way of underſtanding." It is his gracious pleaſure, that his houſe ſhould be filled. He commands his ſervants to go forth, and bid all whom they find, and even compel them to come in. You have heard the invitation. Why do you delay? What is the buſineſs, or the pleaſure which detains you. Go now; the door may ſoon be ſhut. Then, while the happy gueſts are rejoicing, in the preſence, and feaſting at the table of their Lord, you will ſtand lamenting without in the dark and ſtormy night, void of comfort, void of hope.

This is the bright ſeaſon of God's patience and of your hope. It is now an accepted time. Pardon and glory are offered; repentance and obedience are urged. God's providence warns you, his word invites you, his ſpirit ſtrives with you, and his mercy waits on you.—But this clear—this ſmiling day is coming to an end: with many it is far ſpent. If you ſhould let it paſs away neglected, you will be ſhut out in utter darkneſs. With what anguiſh then will you remember the paſt calls of mercy, which you have deſpiſed, the paſt ſtrivings of the ſpirit, which you have reſiſted, the paſt forbearance of God which you have abuſed? Will you not mourn at the laſt, when your fleſh and your body are conſumed, and your ſoul and ſpirit are tormented? Will you not lament in the language of the deſpairing youth in the Proverbs; "How have I hated inſtruction, and my heart deſpiſed reproof? And I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them who inſtructed me?" "Look diligently," then, "leſt any man fail of the grace of God; leſt any root of bitterneſs ſpringing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; leſt there be

any profane perſon, as Eſau, who for one morſel of meat ſold his birthright; for you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the bleſſing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance," or change of purpoſe in his father, "though he ſought the bleſſing carefully with tears."

3. Our Saviour warns us, that ſelf-confident ſinners, in the midſt of their vain pleas, will be ſilenced with a ſudden rebuke. "Ye ſhall *begin* to ſtand without, and to knock, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open to us." They will but *begin*, they will not finiſh their application, before the Lord will anſwer them, "I know you not." When they begin to *reſume* their arguments, he will interrupt them, "I tell you, I know you not; depart from me."

A conſciouſneſs of their guilt, a remembrance of their iniquities, and a view of the holineſs of their judge, will cauſe their tongues to faulter, while they are urging their claims to heaven. Their knocking and crying for admittance denote their earneſt deſire of the mercy, which once they deſpiſed. The repulſe given them when they *begin* to plead, ſignifies what ſudden conviction will ſeize them—what intolerable confuſion will overwhelm them. Their ſins will riſe to the view of their conſciences, and ſtand in frightful array before their eyes. They will ſee their own deformed character, as workers of iniquity. What place in heaven can there be for ſuch? They will ſuddenly be convinced of a truth, of which they ſeldom thought before, that in the preſence of a holy, all-ſeeing God, external forms, however ſpecious, avail nothing, while iniquity is regarded in the heart. What torment will be added to diſappointment, when the works on which they

depended, are rejected as vain and worthleſs, and conſcience confirms the ſentence? When the Lord comes to execute judgment, he will convince all who are ungodly of all the ungodly deeds, which they have impiouſly committed, and of all the hard ſpeeches, which they have preſumptuouſly ſpoken; every mouth will be ſtopped, and all the impenitent world will feel themſelves guilty before him.

4. Our Lord expreſſes the miſery of ſinners in the future world by the phraſe of their *departing from him.* "I know you not whence ye are; *depart from me*, all workers of iniquity."

God is an all-perfect and moſt glorious being. The happineſs of rational creatures conſiſts in the enjoyment of his favour. This is their life. His favour is communicated to men through the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, who is the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon. The happineſs of heaven is therefore often expreſſed in ſcripture by the phraſes of *ſeeing God*, and being *with Chriſt*.

The Pſalmiſt ſays, "In God's preſence is fulneſs of joy, and at his right hand are pleaſures for ever more." Our Saviour ſays, "Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God." Saint Paul ſays, "I have a deſire to depart, and be with Chriſt, which is far better," than to abide in the fleſh. "When Chriſt ſhall appear," ſays the apoſtle John, "We ſhall be like him for we ſhall ſee him as he is." On the other hand, the miſery of the wicked in the future world is expreſſed by their being ſeparated from God, and from Chriſt, which is to be ſeparated unto all evil. Our Lord tells us, that, at the laſt day, he will ſay to them on his left hand, "Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

"Theſe," ſaint Paul ſays, "ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." They will be baniſhed from the gates of heaven, excluded from the favour of God and the compaſſion of the redeemer, ſhut out from the company of all holy beings, and barred from all hope of ever gaining the ſacred manſions of comfort, peace and joy.

This leads us to obſerve,

5. The *abſolute* and *peremptory manner*, in which Chriſt will thruſt them from his preſence. "I tell you, I know you not—depart from me." It is vain to urge your claims, or preſs your arguments. I tell you, you cannot be received, for you are workers of iniquity. There is no manſion prepared for you here. Depart hence to the place prepared for ſuch as you. The abſoluteneſs of the final ſentence will cut off all hope of a revocation. Some, perhaps, flatter themſelves, that the threatenings of ſcripture intend no more than a *temporary* puniſhment, and that, if they ſhould unhappily fall under the puniſhment threatened, they may ſtill be delivered; and, after a proper purgation, be admitted to happineſs. But our Lord certainly knew, what this puniſhment would be. He has here, and in ſeveral other places, given us a deſcription of it in language well adapted to awaken and alarm careleſs and guilty ſouls. Do you find here any intimation, that it will be ſhort, or that it will ever come to an end? Does not the whole complexion of this diſcourſe indicate the contrary? Is it not ſaid of the workers of iniquity, though they will ſeek to enter after the door is ſhut, they will not be able? Is not the ſentence, "Depart from me," expreſſed in the moſt abſolute and unequivocal terms? Yea; has not Chriſt

declared, in so many words, "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment." Where then do you find hope, that the door will afterward be opened to you? It is open now, what would you have more? Strive to enter before it is shut. Once shut it will be opened no more.

6. To give us the stronger idea of the future misery of sinners, our Saviour describes the *bitter lamentations*, with which they will depart from him. "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Their punishment will be not only the loss of good, but the presence of evil. Their departure from God is not an extinction of being; this would prevent all wailing; but it is going away into a state of positive misery. The greatness of this misery is expressed in scripture by a variety of metaphors taken from such things, as, in the present life we find to be most painful and tormenting. It is said, The wicked shall be turned into hell—cast into a furnace of fire—thrust out into utter darkness—consigned to the worst company, that of the devil and his angels—tormented with the worm which never dies—and, in general, that there is a strange punishment for the workers of iniquity, a punishment, which they will not believe, though one declare it to them, and which they cannot fully apprehend, though it were described to them. No wonder that there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Are there any too stout to bend their knees in repentance before God, and implore his mercy? Are there any who dare to provoke his jealousy by scoffing at the threatenings of his word, and spurning the punishment which he has denounced? Will your hearts be able to endure? Or will your hands be strong, when he shall deal with

you? The Lord himſelf has ſpoken, and he will do it.

7. Our Saviour adds, "Ye ſhall ſee Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God; and you yourſelves thruſt out. And they ſhall come from the eaſt and from the weſt, and from the north and from the ſouth, and ſhall ſit down in the kingdom of God." The rich man, in the place of torments, "ſaw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his boſom." The wicked in a ſtate of puniſhment will have a diſtant, but mortifying view of the righteous in the regions of bliſs. Through the gloomy ſhades of the infernal world, they will behold the ſons of virtue gathering from all quarters under heaven, and taking their ſeats, with ſongs of triumph and joy, in the realms of eternal glory. There they will ſee not only the patriarchs, prophets, apoſtles, martyrs and other diſtinguiſhed ſaints; but many of their contemporaries and acquaintances—many whom perhaps they deſpiſed as their inferiors, or reprobated as outcaſts here on earth—and multitudes from unexpected parts of the world, who never enjoyed the advantages indulged to them.

If it ſhould be your awful doom to be ſent into this place of puniſhment, what pungent and tormenting reflections will ariſe from the diſtant ſight of that glorious world with all its bleſſed inhabitants. There you will ſee ſome, who were your dear companions on earth, now for ever ſeparated from you, no more to mingle in your company—ſome who ſet out with you in the religious life, but who preſſed forward with ardour, when you turned back to the ways of ſin, which have led you down to deſtruction—ſome who urged and encouraged you to perſevere and hold out, but whoſe counſels you deſpiſed and rejected—

ſome whom you endeavored to corrupt from truth and virtue, and ſeduce into error and vice; but who, by the grace of God, delivered themſelves from your ſnares—ſome, who never enjoyed your privileges, but made a far better uſe of thoſe which they had—ſome whom you regarded with contempt for their ſmall abilities or obſcure condition; but who now are far above you mingling with angels and ſhining in glory—ſome whom you rediculed for imputed ſuperſtition, preciſeneſs and hypocriſy, but who receive from God the reward of their ſtrict unyielding virtue, and humble unaffected piety. There will be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth, when you ſhall behold them in the kingdom of heaven, while you, who had equal, or ſuperior proſpects, means and opportunities, are thruſt down to the regions of darkneſs. But, beloved, let me hope better things of you, and things which accompany ſalvation, though I thus ſpeak.

8. Our Lord cloſes this ſolemn ſcene with an obſervation, which he often made. "Behold there are laſt, which ſhall be firſt; and there are firſt which ſhall be laſt." Many who enjoy the greateſt privileges, and ſeem to ſtand faireſt for heaven, will be excluded; while others, who appeared to be under peculiar diſadvantages, and were thought far from the kingdom of God, will be admitted into it. God's thoughts and ways are not as ours. Chriſt here has a primary reference to the Jews and gentiles. The former were God's people, and to them the goſpel was firſt ſent; but they rejected it, and with it the ſalvation which it brought: but the gentiles, to whom the goſpel was preached after the Jews had rejected it, embraced it, when they heard it, and entered into the kingdom of God.

The obſervation has a ſtill farther intendment. Many, who ſtand high in the charity of men, will be caſt out of God's preſence, as vile and abominable; while others, whoſe characters ſeem doubtful, or who are condemned by a cenſorious world, will be found to glory, honour and praiſe at the coming of Chriſt. Some boaſting, ſelf-confident profeſſors will be driven away as odious hypocrites; while diffident, doubting, trembling ſouls, will be received as pure and upright before God. Some who have been favored with good inſtructions, virtuous examples, and every advantage of a religious education, will be excluded from heaven; while others, ſurrounded with difficulties, oppoſed by temptations, and almoſt unaided by human means, will ſo ſtrive as to preſs in at the ſtrait gate. Some who ſuſtained a ſober character, and regularly attended on the ordinances of God's houſe, will be found but formaliſts and hypocrites; while others, whoſe viſible character was for a time far more exceptionable, will by the renewing and ſanctifying grace of God be brought to glory.

Truſt not then in the opinion which men may form of you, or the applauſe which they may beſtow upon you—truſt not in your external advantages, your good education, or your regular and orderly manner of life. See that the love of religion poſſeſs your hearts, and the fear of God govern your actions. Paul ſays, "To me it is a ſmall thing, that I ſhould be judged of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own ſelf; for he that judgeth me is the Lord, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and make manifeſt the counſels of the heart."

It is an awful thought that any, who have enjoyed your advantages and opportunities, and

who, in addition to theſe, have experienced the inward awakenings and excitations of the divine ſpirit, as has been the caſe with ſome of you—perhaps with many, ſhould, after all, be ſhut out of heaven. Some ſuch unhappy inſtances, doubtleſs, there will be. Take heed that you add not to the number.

How you ſhall enter in at the ſtrait gate, the Saviour himſelf has taught you. His command is, "Strive to enter in." This ſtriving, you have ſeen, is ſomething more, than aſking for admiſſion; for ſome who thus ſeek to enter, will not be able. It is ſomething more, than hearing Chriſt teach, and eating and drinking in his preſence; for ſome who can plead this, will be ſhut out. What is it then? It is renouncing all iniquity with godly ſorrow, devoting yourſelves unreſervedly to a holy life, and purſuing this life faithfully to the death. The workers of iniquity muſt depart from Chriſt. They who do the will of God, will be received into the heavenly kingdom.

Some, when they hear that they muſt *ſtrive*, entertain too limited an idea of the matter, as if ſtriving conſiſted in fervour of prayer, and extraordinary attention to certain devotional exerciſes. If theſe were all, why were the perſons mentioned in our text repulſed? Prayer and attendance on ordinances are but a part of the buſineſs. They are means, and uſeful means when applied in ſeaſon, and with a view to the end. But to complete the idea of ſtriving, there muſt be a ſteady perſevering engagedneſs in the whole work of religion, without exception against any part of it. The word rendered, *Strive*, is borrowed from the publick games then in uſe. It alludes to the exertions with which combatants in a race or conflict, ſtrove for the maſtery. How did racers

strive for the prize proposed to them? Was it merely by earnest intreaties to the master of the games, that he would adjudge the prize to them? No: it was by entering the lists with resolution, throwing off every weight that might impede their running the race with activity and constancy, and pursuing it to the end. "Know ye not, that they who run in a race, run all; but one" only "receiveth the prize?" In the Christian race, there is a prize for all who will run: "So run that ye may obtain." "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but you an incorruptible. Run not as uncertainly; strive not as one that beateth the air. But keep under your bodies and bring them into subjection, lest, after all your hopes and prospects, you should be castaways."

SERMON XIII.

Pilate's Inſcription on the Croſs of Chriſt.

A Communion Sermon.

JOHN xix. 19——22.

And Pilate wrote a title and put it on the croſs; and the writing was, "Jeſus of Nazareth the King of the Jews" This title then read many of the Jews, for the place where Jeſus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Then ſaid the chief prieſts of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, "the King of the Jews;" but that he ſaid, "I am the King of the Jews." Pilate anſwered, What I have written I have written.

THE Meſſiah was foretold, in ancient prophecy, under the character and title of a *king*, whoſe government ſhould extend to all nations, but ſhould be exerciſed in a peculiar manner over the Jews. His extenſive dominion is deſcribed in the ſecond Pſalm; "I have ſet my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Aſk of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmoſt parts of the earth for thy poſſeſſion." In the ninth chapter of Iſaiah, he is deſcribed as ſitting on the throne of David, and reigning over the houſe of Iſrael: "Unto us a child is born; unto us a ſon is given; and the government ſhall be on

his ſhoulder; his name ſhall be called the prince of peace; of the increaſe of his government and peace there ſhall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order and eſtabliſh it with judgment and with juſtice from henceforth even forever."

As the Meſſiah was to make his perſonal appearance in Judea, and there firſt to diſplay the bleſſings of his ſpiritual kingdom, he is deſcribed as eminently the king of the *Jews*. But the glorious things foretold concerning this *ſpiritual* kingdom, the Jews underſtood in a temporal and worldly ſenſe. They imagined, that he would erect his throne in Jeruſalem, their capital city; would deliver them from the oppreſſion of the Roman government, and would reduce all nations into a ſtate of ſubjection to them.

When Jeſus appeared and wrought miracles among them, and proclaimed the near approach of the kingdom of God, many were in high expectation, that they ſhould ſoon ſee him at the head of their nation, ſpreading his dominion over the world. And impatient at his delay, they would have taken him by force and made him a king. But when they found, that their worldly expectations were not to be anſwered, mortified at their diſappointment, they called him a deceiver, and ſought his deſtruction. And, among other accuſations, they alledged, that he had called himſelf a king, and thus had ſpoken againſt the authority of Ceſar.

If Jeſus had actually aſſumed the regal power in Judea, and had begun to raiſe an army for the expulſion of the imperial authority, they would have been highly gratified with the deſign, and would have reſorted by thouſands to his ſtandard. But becauſe he diſclaimed all temporal dominion,

they refuſed to own him as the Meſſiah, and ſtudied to effect his ruin. With this view they brought him before the Roman governor, and accuſed him as a ſeditious man, who had perverted the nation, and forbidden to pay tribute to Ceſar.

Jeſus explains before Pilate the nature of his kingdom. He ſays, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, then would my ſervants fight, that I ſhould not be delivered to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from hence." Pilate aſks, "Art thou a king then?" Jeſus anſwered, "Thou ſayeſt, that I am, a king. To this end was I born, and for this cauſe came I into the world, that I ſhould bear witneſs to the truth. Every one, who is of the truth, heareth my voice." "The kingdom which I claim is a kingdom of truth and reaſon; not of force and arms; and my ſubjects are they who learn and love the truth; who hear and obey my voice—not they who take up arms and fight to dethrone monarchs, ſubvert eſtabliſhed governments, and gain worldly dominion for a favorite maſter."

The governor is now fully convinced, that Jeſus is innocent, and that the charge brought againſt him is groundleſs and malicious. From this time he endeavors, in ſome peaceable way, to effect his releaſe. He propoſes every expedient, which he could think of, to pacify the enraged multitude, and ſave the unoffending priſoner. But they perſiſt in their demand of a ſentence againſt him; and urge their demand by this argument, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Ceſar's friend. Whoſoever maketh himſelf a king, ſpeaketh againſt Ceſar." The argument prevailed. Though Pilate knew that Jeſus was innocent, yet he feared, that by diſcharging him, he ſhould endanger himſelf. He was impreſſed with the

idea, that the Jews, in their preſent ſtate of irritation, would accuſe him to the emperor, of having protected a uſurper; and therefore to ſave himſelf from danger he delivered Jeſus to be crucified. But, at the ſame time, he made an open and publick declaration in favor of the priſoner. "He took water, and waſhed his hands in the preſence of the multitude, ſaying, I am innocent of the blood of this juſt man: ſee ye to it." And he cauſed to be fixed on the croſs an inſcription purporting the innocence and dignity of the ſufferer.

Crucifixion was a kind of puniſhment in uſe among the Romans; but inflicted only on ſlaves. The Jews adopted it from the Romans. When a perſon was to ſuffer this kind of death, the Romans uſed to publiſh his name, and the crime for which he was puniſhed. This was done, either by proclamation, or by an inſcription fixed over his head. The inſcription was made in large black characters on a whitened board nailed to the top of the croſs, ſo as to be conſpicuous and legible at a diſtance. In conformity to this uſage, Pilate wrote a title and placed it on the croſs of Jeſus, in theſe words, THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Pilate ſeems to have written, as Caiphas prophefied, concerning Chriſt, "not of himſelf," or by the natural dictates of his own mind, but by a divine overruling influence. For ſurely the man, who, from a natural timidity, had juſt before delivered Jeſus to be crucified, leſt he ſhould endanger his head to the emperor, would not now, of himſelf, proclaim this Jeſus the king of the Jews, in his own hand writing on the croſs. There muſt undoubtedly have been a providential interpoſition in the caſe.

His writing in this form was ſo remarkable, as to be noticed by all the evangeliſts. And no leſs remarkable was his peremptory adherence to the form, when the chief prieſts importuned him to alter it; and inſtead of aſſerting, "This *is* the king of the Jews, to write, "He *ſaid*, I am the king of the Jews." Pilate's anſwer, "What I have written, I have written," expreſſes a reſolution in the caſe, which we ſhould not have expected from a man, who, through fear of being accuſed to the emperor, had ſo lately ſentenced Jeſus to be crucified, as one who had called himſelf the king of the Jews.

This declaration of Pilate was of great importance to vindicate the innocence, and proclaim the dignity of Chriſt; and it was ſo circumſtanced, that it tended much to ſpread his name in the world, and to open the way for the propagation of his goſpel. Chriſt ſays, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." His death on the croſs, though intended by his enemies to ſink his name in darkneſs, was the occaſion of diffuſing the knowledge, and eſtabliſhing the credit of his religion. And the teſtimony of Pilate undoubtedly had great influence in this matter. For, in the firſt place, Pilate was a man of high eminence and diſtinction. He was governor of Judea under the emperor; and his teſtimony would be regarded, among both Jews and Romans, much more than that of a private perſon. The opportunities which he had, and the pains which he took to examine the character and works of Jeſus, and to inveſtigate the nature and evidence of the allegations againſt him, would add much to the weight and credibility of his teſtimony. and certainly he was under a very powerful temptation to have declared his priſoner guilty, if he had found him

ſo, becauſe the general voice of the people, eſpecially of the ruling and influential men among the people, was againſt him. But Pilate, under all his advantages to know the truth, and under all his prejudices againſt the priſoner, repeatedly declared him innocent. And when ſentence of condemnation was extorted from him by the clamours and threats of the people, he waſhed his hands in their preſence, declaring himſelf pure from the blood of that juſt man; and when he delivered him to be crucified, he fixed on the croſs his own teſtimony, that this man, who was now ſuffering for having called himſelf the king of the Jews, was of right their king. This title of ſo unuſual a kind would naturally attract the attention, and excite the enquiry of the ſpectators, and lead many to the knowledge of the extraordinary character of this wonderful ſufferer, who otherwiſe might have been conſidered by them merely as a common offender.

We may obſerve farther, ſecondly,

This teſtimony of Pilate was given in a moſt conſpicuous place, and on a moſt publick occaſion.

There was collected, at this time, a vaſt multitude of people. It was the ſeaſon of the paſſover, when the males throughout Judea, and many Jews and Proſelytes from other parts, aſſembled at Jeruſalem. The execution of a perſon, who had become ſo famous by his doctrines and works, and by the controverſy concerning him, would naturally draw vaſt numbers together. As he was put to death under the authority of the emperour, and as the Roman officers and ſoldiers, who were ſtationed at Jeruſalem, were called out to preſerve order on the occaſion, there muſt have been many ſtrangers, as well as Jews, preſent at the crucifixion. And as the execution was in a place nigh to

the city, we muſt ſuppoſe that almoſt all the inhabitants of the city, and the ſtrangers occaſionally there, went out to ſee the tranſactions of the day. So that Pilate's teſtimony to Chriſt's kingly authority muſt have been generally known. "It was read of many." And it was of ſuch ſingular tenor, that they who read it, would communicate it to others.

It is alſo remarked, thirdly, by the hiſtorians, That the inſcription was written in *Hebrew*, *Greek* and *Latin*, the three languages then in moſt common uſe. The *Hebrew* language was underſtood in Judea and the parts adjacent, and by many of the Romans, who had been converſant in Judea, ſince it became a province of the empire. The *Latin* was the native tongue of the Romans. The *Greek* was very extenſively known. It was the learned language of the day. Moſt men of education were acquainted with it. So that this teſtimony of Pilate was made as publick as poſſible. It was known almoſt as extenſively, as the crucifixion itſelf.

This circumſtance in our Lord's death will ſuggeſt to us ſome profitable reflections.

1. We have reaſon to admire the divine wiſdom in giving ſuch ſtriking evidence of the innocence and dignity of Jeſus Chriſt, even in the time of his greateſt ſufferings.

Jeſus came into the world to be the Redeemer of our fallen race. "We are not redeemed with corruptible things; but with the precious blood of Chriſt himſelf, who was ordained before the foundation of the world, and was manifeſted in theſe laſt times for us, who by him do believe in God." The wiſdom of God did not ſee fit to forgive guilty mortals without ſome adequate ſacrifice made for their ſins. And to this grand purpoſe no ſac-

riſice was adequate, but that of Jeſus the ſon of God.

Death naturally indicates weakneſs; and judicially it indicates guilt. Mankind in ſeeing a perſon die, are led to view him as a poor impotent creature, and in ſeeing one ſuffer by the hand of the executioner, they are led to view him as a criminal. Now that the death of Chriſt might not be conſidered, either as the mere effect of natural weakneſs, or as the judicial effect of perſonal guilt, God was pleaſed at this time, to give ſome remarkable evidences of his innocence and dignity. Hence we are encouraged to truſt in his ſacrifice as ſufficient to expiate our guilt, and to commit ourſelves to his power as ſufficient to ſave us from deſtruction.

The meekneſs, ſerenity, patience and benevolence, which he exhibited in his ſufferings, were proofs of his ſuperior virtue and holineſs. The fooliſh and inconſiſtent accuſations, which his enemies brought againſt him, and the contradictory teſtimonies, by which they endeavoured to ſupport their charges, were proofs of the purity and integrity of his life. The ample, repeated and ſolemn teſtimony, which the Roman governour gave in his favour, muſt have gone far to eſtabliſh in the minds of the ſpectators a high opinion of his character. Beſides all this, God interpoſed his own awful teſtimony, which nothing, but the moſt obſtinate and determined incredulity, could reſiſt. The heavens were wrapt in darkneſs, the frame of nature was convulſed, the rocks were rent in pieces, the monuments of the dead were burſt open, the vail of the temple was torn from top to bottom, earth and ſky were thrown into agonies, when Jeſus bowed his head and gave up the ghoſt.

Such a concurrence of circumſtances, all ſingular, and ſome ſtupendous, in favour of the ſuffering Saviour, forced conviction on many, and ſtruck aſtoniſhment into all. One ſays, "Surely this was a righteous man." Another exclaims, "This was the ſon of God." "And all the people, who came together to that ſight, ſeeing what was done, ſmote their breaſts, and returned."

2. We ſee that there is a great inconſiſtency in the conduct of vicious men. They have underſtanding to diſcern, and conſcience to feel their moral obligations, and yet by the intereſts, honours and pleaſures of the world, they are drawn into actions palpably inconſiſtent with theſe obligations. They know what is right, and practiſe what is wrong. They ſee the good, and chooſe the evil.

This inconſiſtency appeared in Pilate. Though, as hiſtorians ſay, he was a man of great cruelty and pride, yet the innocent and amiable character of Jeſus ſtruck his mind ſo powerfully, that he wiſhed to diſcharge him. Hearing the people importunate to have him crucified, Pilate endeavoured to ſave him by propoſing a lighter puniſhment. When this propoſal was rejected, the governour offered to releaſe him in compliance with the cuſtom of the feaſt, which required that one priſoner, whom the people demanded, ſhould be ſet at liberty. When this offer was refuſed, he next, to move their compaſſion, exhibited Jeſus, ſuffering under the abuſes of a brutal ſoldiery; lacerated with thorns, mangled with ſtripes, beſmeared with blood, bedaubed with ſpittal; and ſaid, "Behold the man!" Has he not ſuffered enough? Finding them ſtill pertinacious, he yielded; and rather than hazard his place, he delivered Jeſus to be crucified. His conſcience dictated

the releaſe of the innocent priſoner; the love of honour urged his condemnation. The latter prevailed. Still Pilate is diſſatisfied with himſelf. He knows, he has done wrong. And what ſhall he do next?—To pacify his troubled mind, he takes water and waſhes his hands, aſſerts his innocence, and caſts the whole guilt of the tranſaction on the Jews. Then, by a ſingular inſcription on the croſs, he proclaims Jeſus the king of the Jews.

See what contradiction—what inconſiſtency there is in his conduct—what perplexity and diſtraction in his feelings! He choſe to do right; but the fear of loſing his place, and perhaps his life, interpoſed. He ſacrificed a man, whom he knew to be innocent, rather than expoſe himſelf to the danger of an impeachment. And when he has done, ſtill he is reſtleſs, and contrives one expedient after another to quiet his guilty mind.

How much better it would have been to have acted right in the firſt inſtance. This would have ſaved him from much perplexity and embarraſſment. Had he not only declared Jeſus innocent, but refuſed alſo to condemn him, he would have been clear from the guilt of his blood. But by delivering him into the hands of his enemies, he ſtained his own hands with innocent blood; and though he waſhed them with ſoap and nitre, the ſtain of his guilt remained.

Known wickedneſs leaves a burden on the mind, which can be removed only by deep repentance, and humble application to the mercy of God. Sinners often feel a ſtruggle between virtue and vice—between a right and a wrong conduct. In the conflict the love of pleaſure, a regard to intereſt, or ſome worldly motive ſteps in, decides the conteſt and gives the victory to vice. After the action is paſt, there is time for cool reflection.

Now the ſinner condemns himſelf. He regrets the evil which he has done. He would recal it; but it is too late. He contrives to palliate it. He lays the blame on others, imputes much to temptation, and perhaps ſeeks relief in ſome ſuperſtitious rites. But after all, his iniquity, is marked before him, and can be effaced only by the tears of godly ſorrow: guilt lies on his ſoul, and the only expedient for relief is a penitent reſort to the forgiving mercy of an offended God. "Thou deſireſt not ſacrifice," ſays David, "elſe would I give it. The ſacrifices of God are a broken ſpirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou will not deſpiſe." Great peace have they who love God's law; but there is no peace to the wicked. They cannot reſt.

3. We ſee, that the wiſdom of God can overrule the wickedneſs of men to advance the deſigns of his grace.

The Jewiſh prieſts and rulers inſulted Jeſus with the mock honours of a king. They crowned him with thorns, cloathed him in purple, ſaluted him in deriſion, bowed the knee before him, and ſaid, "Hail King of the Jews." They brought him to Pilate and obtained ſentence of death againſt him——they ſaw him nailed to the croſs. Now, they imagined, his kingly dignity was come to a ridiculous end, and all his pretended glory was extinguiſhed in eternal infamy. But here he is proclaimed a king, and declared to be the ſon of God, in a manner which gave an extenſive ſpread, and a perpetual honour to his name. The very means, which they uſed to ſtop the progreſs of his religion, confirmed its credit, and drew multitudes to embrace it.

How blind is the policy of man! How unſearchable are the counſels of God! "The wrath of

man ſhall praiſe him, and the remainder of that wrath he will reſtrain."

The perſecution which aroſe about Stephen, and which was intended to extirpate, at once, the religion of Chriſt, was the occaſion of its more rapid and extenſive propagation; for the miniſters of Chriſt, diſperſed by this perſecution, went every where preaching the word, and the hand of the Lord was with them.

When Paul was in bonds, his enemies imagined, that by confining ſo noted a preacher, they had given a mighty check to the goſpel. But his bonds turned rather to the furtherance of the goſpel, by warming the zeal and increaſing the activity of other preachers, and by giving him leiſure to commit to writing, for the benefit of ſucceeding ages, thoſe glorious doctrines, which he had before taught only by his preaching.

The unbelief of the Jews was the occaſion of enriching the gentiles; for it was the means of ſending the apoſtles into all the world to diſſeminate the glad tidings of ſalvation, which, at firſt, were proclaimed to Jews only.

God's ways are not as our ways, nor are his thoughts as our thoughts. O the depth of his wiſdom! His judgments are paſt finding out. Let us truſt him at all times, and pour out our hearts before him. He can do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we aſk or think.

4. How much ſhould Chriſtians delight to ſpread the favour of the Redeemer's name in the earth? Pilate, though a lover of honor more than of Chriſt, yet declared him a juſt man, and publiſhed his title as king of the Jews. Shall any of us deny to Chriſt that honor, which was paid him by a heathen—by Pilate? Shall we treat his goſpel and his ordinances with neglect? Shall we decline the

profeſſion of his name, and refuſe to take a ſeat at his table? Shall we, when his enemies reproach him, ſit ſilent, and never ſpeak a word in his favor? Shall we be content to live and die, without giving the world to know, whether we believe in him or not? Whether we own him as our king, or reject him as a uſurper?

How many are there, who treat Chriſt with leſs reſpect than did this heathen governor? He declared Jeſus to be innocent; to be a righteous perſon; to be a king. And though he gave him up to death, yet he bare teſtimony that he did not deſerve it. How many are there, who never acknowledge him at all; who make no profeſſion of his religion; who give no teſtimony of regard to him? And of thoſe, who in words profeſs to know him, how many in works deny him? If we call him a king, let us ſhew ourſelves to be his ſubjects by obedience to his laws, attendance on his ordinances, and reliance on his promiſes. And as fellow ſubjects of the ſame prince, let us love one another, and be fellow workers unto his kingdom.

5. Pilate, as we have ſeen, was ſtedfaſt in his declaration. Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering.

When the governor had publickly teſtified, that Jeſus was a king, no importunity could move him to retract, or in the leaſt to alter his teſtimony. "What I have written, I have written." Let us have the ſame reſolution. Have we made a profeſſion of faith in, and obedience to Chriſt? Let us maintain it, and live in conformity to it. If any would ſeduce us from it, let us anſwer them, "We have believed, and therefore we have ſpoken; and what we have ſpoken, we have ſpoken. We have ſworn and we will perform it, that we will walk as becomes the goſpel. Jeſus is always

the ſame. He cannot deny himſelf; we will not deny him. We will pay him our vows. If it ſeem evil to you to ſerve him, chooſe ye this day whom ye will ſerve. As for us we will ſerve him whom we have owned as our Lord. To whom elſe can we go? He has the words of eternal life." This is the language in which we ſhould anſwer gainſayers. We are to conſider well what we engage, to ſit down and count the coſt. And when we have deliberately and rationally formed our reſolution, in that we ſhould abide. It does not become a Chriſtian to uſe lightneſs; to follow every wind of doctrine; his profeſſion ſhould not be yea, and nay; but, like the promiſes of Chriſt, yea and amen. It is a good thing, that the heart be eſtabliſhed with grace. Let us chooſe the religion of Chriſt; and abide in it without change.

6. We ſee how inclined men are to caſt the blame of their ſins upon other people.

Pilate, in compliance with the demand of the Jews, delivered Jeſus to be crucified; and that the fault might appear to be theirs, rather than his, he wrote on the croſs, *This is the King of the Jews*. They are crucifying their king. So he had ſaid juſt before; "I am innocent of the blood of this juſt man: ſee ye to it."

Guilt is a heavy burden to the conſcience; and every man chooſes to transfer it from himſelf to ſome other. Adam, after his tranſgreſſion endeavored to exculpate himſelf by imputing the fault to the woman; and ſhe palliated her crime by aſcribing it to the guileful temptation of the ſerpent. It is better, however, for every one honeſtly to ſee, and ingenuouſly to confeſs his own faults, and, inſtead of pacifying his conſcience by vain excuſes, to remove his guilt by real repentance.

Jeſus has borne our ſins in his own body on the croſs. Let us by faith repair to him, who has been made a ſin-offering for us, that we may be made the righteouſneſs of God in him. "There is no condemnation to them who are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the ſpirit. For the law of the ſpirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus has made them free from the law of ſin and death."

Under a ſenſe of our guilt, let us apply to the blood of Chriſt, for "this will cleanſe us from all ſin." "If we ſay, we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves. If we confeſs our ſins, God is faithful and juſt to forgive them."

Let us ſit down at the table of our Lord, with hearts relying on him, who on the croſs made himſelf an offering for our guilt; and with reſolutions of obedience to him, who on the croſs was proclaimed our king. It is not eating at his table, but doing his will, that entitles us to his approbation. "Not every one," ſays he, "that calls me his Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven."

SERMON XIV.

The Diſciples gazing after their aſcending Lord.

A Communion Sermon.

ACTS i. 10, 11.

And while they looked ſtedfaſtly toward heaven, as he went up; behold, two men ſtood by them in white apparel, which alſo ſaid, Ye men of Galilee, why ſtand ye gazing up into heaven? This ſame Jeſus, which is taken up from you into heaven, ſhall ſo come, in like manner as ye have ſeen him go into heaven.

AFTER our Lord had riſen from the dead, he tarried on earth about the ſpace of forty days; during which time he had ſeveral interviews with his diſciples, converſed with them familiarly on things relating to his kingdom; gave them ſuch inſtructions and encouragements, as were neceſſary to guide and animate them in their future work; and, on a day prefixed, he led them out to Bethany, a village nigh to Jeruſalem, where, in conſequence of previous notice a large number of believers had aſſembled to be witneſſes of his aſcenſion. When he was come to the place, he ſtood—he lifted up his hands and bleſſed his choſ-

en disciples—he fervently implored the divine blessing to attend them, and renewed the gracious promises which had before been made to them: and while he was blessing them, praying for them, and commending them to God; and while their eyes were intently fixed upon him, "he was parted from them;" he rose into the air, ascended toward heaven, "and a cloud received him out of their sight." Here they stood with their eyes fixed on that spot in the sky, where they lost the sight of him; and here they would longer have stood, had not the voice of an angel summoned them away. "While they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as Jesus went up two men,"—men in form, but by the splendor of their appearance known to be angels, "stood by them, and said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here gazing into heaven? This same Jesus, who is now taken from you into heaven, shall so come, as ye have seen him go into heaven." On this advice they returned to Jerusalem; and there assembling with other devout persons, they spent their time in such religious exercises, as were adapted to comfort them in present trials, and to prepare them for future labours.

In the words, which have been read, there are two things to be remarked.

First; The *posture* in which the disciples stood, after they had lost sight of their ascending Lord. And, Secondly, The *expostulation* of the angels with them on this occasion.

First; The *posture*, in which the disciples stood, after the ascending Saviour had disappeared from their eyes, is worthy to be remarked. "They looked stedfastly toward heaven, as he went up;" and in this attitude they seem to have continued, after the cloud had received him out of their sight. In this fixed and gazing posture we might

expect to find them after ſuch a ſcene, as had juſt paſt ; For,

1. This poſture was naturally expreſſive of the *diſappointment* which they felt.

They had all along, while their maſter was with them, expected, that he would erect a temporal kingdom, and advance his countrymen to a ſuperiority over other nations, and his particular friends to a ſuperiority over other Jews ; nor could they, by all his premonitions, be perſuaded to give up this flattering hope. His death, indeed, gave it a painful ſhock but did not deſtroy it. After this event, ſome of them ſay, " We had hoped, that he ſhould have redeemed Iſrael," intimating, that their hope was ſtaggered by his unexpected death. But when they ſaw him riſen from the dead, their languiſhing hope was revived ; and they aſked him, " Wilt thou at this time reſtore again the kingdom to Iſrael ?" He anſwered them in a manner, which rebuked their enquiry, but did not wholly extinguiſh their hope. " It is not for you to know the times and ſeaſons, which the father hath put in his own power ; but ye ſhall receive power, after that the Holy Ghoſt is come upon you, and ye ſhall be witneſſes unto me in Jeruſalem, in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermoſt parts of the earth." " When he had ſpoken theſe things, while they beheld, he was taken up from them, and tranſlated beyond their ſight." Their worldly expectations were now at an end. Their Lord was gone—He was gone ; and they were to ſee him no more. Their hope, ſo long entertained, and now ſo ſuddenly and totally diſappointed, fixed their attention to the ſpot, where they laſt had ſeen him, and where he had vaniſhed from their ſight. Their gazing attitude expreſſed thoſe ardent wiſhes which ſuc-

ceeded to their late flattering expectations. So if your moſt valuable treaſure ſhould be irrecoverably loſt in the deep, diſappointment and deſpair would, for a time, fix your eyes on the ſpot, where you ſaw it ſink.

2. This attitude was expreſſive of *affection.*

When we take leave of a dear friend, who is going from us to return no more, we follow him with our eyes, and ſtrive to catch the laſt diſtant ſight of him; and after he diſappears, ſtill we look—and look—and ſtill we long to recover one glimpſe more of the parting object. When a friend is dead, we inſpect and handle his cold remains; we follow him to the grave; we open his coffin to take one view more. When he is depoſited in the earth, we look again. We ſigh, we weep when the falling duſt covers him forever from our ſight. We take a mournful pleaſure in viſiting the ground where he lies, and in reading over and over the dear name inſcribed on his monument.

Similar were the ſenſations of the diſciples, when they looked at their aſcending Lord, and gazed up into heaven after his diſappearance. They had, for years been his conſtant attendants; often had they been charmed with his converſation, and enraptured with his devotion; often had they received from him favors, which no other friend could give, and had ſeen him perform ſuch works, as convinced them, that God was with him. He was now parted from them. No more ſhould they hear from his lips thoſe divine inſtructions which had been ſo pleaſing; thoſe ſweet conſolations which had been ſo refreſhing; thoſe ardent prayers which had been ſo enlivening. They remembered, how their hearts had burned within them, when they heard him ſpeak as never man ſpake, and pray as never man prayed. No wonder, that they looked at him ſtedfaſtly as he

ascended ; and that they still stood gazing after he was gone from their sight.

3. This attitude expressed *amazement.*

Never had they witnessed such a scene as they now beheld in Bethany. Here were assembled more than five hundred brethren to see Jesus for the last time. Hither the Lord had called his particular disciples, whom he designed to be his apostles and witnesses. Here he talked with them, renewed former promises, gave fresh assurances of his presence, prayed over them, blessed them, and took an affectionate leave of them. While he was speaking, he rose from the earth. As he rose, words of kindness and love dropped from his lips, and melted into their ears His body, which had been like other human bodies, was now suddenly changed into a glorious body, like that which had before appeared on the mount at the transfiguration ; or like that which John afterward saw in vision, and which he thus describes : " His countenance was as the sun, his eyes as flames of fire, his head white as snow, and his feet as burning brass." In this wonderful form they saw him gently ascending, like a dove, toward heaven, until a cloud intervened—the same cloud which overshadowed the mount, and which Peter calls the excellent glory. This bright and glorious cloud received him and ascended with him ; and they beheld, until the wonderful scene was by distance lost to their admiring eyes. If the scene exhibited on the mount was so overwhelming, that the disciples fell on their faces, and were sore afraid ; no wonder that this more grand and glorious scence in Bethany should so amaze them, that they stood, for a time gazing up into heaven, unable to recover themselves, or to know where they were, or what they were looking after, until they were brought to their recollection by the speech of the

angels, addreſſing them in human voice. "Why ſtand ye gazing up into heaven? This ſame Jeſus whom ye have ſeen go up into heaven, ſhall ſo come in like manner, as ye have ſeen him go into heaven."

This *expoſtulation* of the angels, we are now, ſecondly, to conſider.

The angels here remind the diſciples, that though Jeſus was gone from their ſight, yet he ſtill lived in heaven to carry on that gracious work, which he had begun on earth; and that from this time, they were to ſee him, not with the bodily eyes, which were now gazing after him, but with the eyes of their faith, which, through the medium of his promiſes, might ſtill diſcern him in his inviſible ſtate, with the ſame organ, and through the ſame medium *we* are to view him. We have not the privilege, which they had, to ſee him in the fleſh; but we may ſee him by faith, as eaſily as they could. It was but for a ſhort time, that they enjoyed perſonal intercourſe with him; and the chief benefit of this intercourſe was to lay a foundation for their faith. What they ſaw and heard, while he was with them was the ground of that faith by which they held a correſpondence with him, after he was gone. And it is alſo the ground of *our* faith in him, and communion with him now. St. John ſays, "That which we have ſeen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye alſo may have fellowſhip with us; and truly our fellowſhip is with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt." The ſight which the diſciples had of their Lord aſcending in his glory, was a ſuitable mean to confirm and enliven their faith. But if in gazing at this wonderful ſcene, they had been ſo long detained and ſo wholly abſorbed, as to looſe their *ſpiritual* views of Chriſt, its end would have been defeated. The word and ordinances of Chriſt are means to

lead our thoughts to him, and assist our converse with him. But we must remember, that hearing his word, and attending on his ordinances, are no farther acceptable to him, and useful to us, than they awaken in us those exercises of faith and love, which will excite us to the active discharge of all religious duties.

It will be proper for us particularly to consider, what views of Christ we should have in the contemplation of his ascension into heaven.

1. Christ warned his disciples, that he would go to him who sent him. Because he said this, their hearts were filled with sorrow. To console them in their sorrow, he assured them, that when he went to the father, he should be glorified with the glory which he had before the world was. Hence he says, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the father." "I go away, but my peace I leave with you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

At the ascension they saw his glory begun; and hence might conclude, that the glory foretold would be completed. "Because Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to the death of the cross, therefore God highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name." And if the Saviour has been honoured and rewarded for all that he has done and suffered in our behalf, we may rest in the full assurance, that through him our works of faith, and labours of love will be graciously accepted. And in his name we may come to God with all confidence for present pardon and future salvation. Had Christ been left in the grave, our faith and hope must have been buried with him. But because he lives, we shall live also. Our life is hidden with Christ in God, and when he shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory.

2. Chriſt told his diſciples, that he was going to prepare a place for them in his father's houſe; and that he would come again and receive them to himſelf. When they ſaw him taken up into heaven, they were naturally reminded of the glorious manſions in God's houſe, into which they might, one day, be received. And it became them not to ſtand gazing into heaven, but rather to ſeek a practical preparation for it, and to aſcertain their title to it. "*We* are begotten to a lively hope by the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead. And if we be riſen with Chriſt, let us ſeek the things, which are above, where Chriſt ſitteth on the right hand of God. Let us ſet our affection on things above, and not on things on the earth." To gaze at heaven is one thing; to prepare for heaven is another. The contemplation of heavenly glory is uſeful only as a mean to draw our affection to it, and quicken our preparation for it. When we think of heaven, let us think of the qualifications neceſſary for admiſſion into it. "Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for theirs is the kingdom of God." Nothing can enter thither, which defiles, or works abomination." Let us examine ourſelves, whether we poſſeſs the temper requiſite for entering into ſo pure a place, and for aſſociating with ſuch holy company, as will be found there. Let us call up our reſolutions againſt all ſin, and fix our purpoſes for a humble walk with God, that we may now enjoy heaven in hope, and may hereafter poſſeſs it in reality.

3. Before Chriſt went away, he taught his diſciples, what they might expect from him after he was gone. "I go to the Father; and whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in my name, I will do it for you, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ſhall aſk any thing in my name, I will do it."

When they saw their Lord ascend, sorrow filled their hearts; but the recollection of this promise, that he would be their advocate with the Father, might reasonably turn their sorrow into joy. It was, on this account, expedient for them, that he should go away.

It is a comfort to humble christians, in all their approaches to God, that Jesus, who is the propitiation for their sins, lives in heaven to make intercession for them. We think it a privilege to have pious intercessors on earth; for the prayers of the righteous avail much. But a much greater privilege is it to have an advocate in heaven, especially such an advocate as Christ. He is near to us—near *in relation;* for he has taken part of our flesh and blood, and is not ashamed to call us brethren—near in *affection;* for he has been tempted as we are, and can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He can therefore pray for us with the earnestness of an experienced friend. He can pray with success; for he is near to God. He, as God's beloved son, dwells in his bosom, and God hears him always. He has powerful arguments to urge in our behalf. He can plead his own purchase; and God's approbation of him in his work, and promise to him grounded on his fulfilling this work. This is the Father's promise to the son, "That he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; by the knowledge of him shall many be justified, because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and made intercession for transgressors." In consideration of Christ's continual and prevailing intercession, the apostle exhorts us to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

4. When Chriſt dwelt on earth, he promiſed his diſciples, that, "if he went away, he would ſend them the comforter, even the ſpirit of truth, who ſhould abide with them forever." His glorious aſcent to heaven ought to have reminded them, and now to remind us, of that precious promiſe, by which the comforts and aſſiſtances of the ſpirit are ſecured to the faithful.

The humble chriſtian feels his inſufficiency to the duties and trials to which he is called. But he is ſtrong in the grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus. He lives on this promiſe, "My grace is ſufficient for thee." When his faith follows Jeſus to heaven, it looks earneſtly and ſtedfaſtly to him for the ſupply of the ſpirit. Conſcious of his own weakneſs, he adopts for himſelf Paul's prayer for the Epheſians, that "God would grant them according to the riches of his glory to be ſtrengthened with might by his ſpirit in the inner man; that Chriſt might dwell in their hearts by faith; and that, being rooted and grounded in love, they might be able to comprehend with all ſaints what is the length and breadth and depth and height, and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge, and might be filled with all the fulneſs of God."

5. The angels expreſsly direct the diſciples to regard the aſcenſion of Chriſt, as an evidence of his ſecond coming. "This ſame Jeſus, who is taken up from you into heaven, ſhall ſo in like manner come, as ye have ſeen him go into heaven."

"As Jeſus was once offered to bear the ſin of many, ſo to them who look for him he ſhall appear a ſecond time without ſin unto ſalvation."

Jeſus taught his diſciples, that as God had appointed a time for the general judgment of the world, ſo he had committed the adminiſtration

of this judgment to him who was the *son of man*. This great and solemn doctrine now received new confirmation by Christ's resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven. The apostle says, "God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

When the disciples saw their Lord ascending in his glory, how naturally might his former declarations relative to his coming to judgment, fill their minds?

The angels say, "This *same* Jesus shall come." Jesus was God manifest in the flesh. He ascended in the same body in which he appeared on earth. And in the same body will he come to judgment. The judgment is committed to him, because he is *the son of man*. The general resurrection will precede the judgment, that the dead may be judged as men in the flesh; and Jesus will descend from heaven with his real body, that he may sit to judge them as a man in the flesh. "When he shall come in the clouds of heaven, every eye shall see him." The judgment, of which Christ so often speaks, is not a figurative and imaginary scene; it will be a real, sensible transaction.

If we are to be judged by Christ, certainly we need not fear any undue rigor or unreasonable severity. The Judge is a partaker of our nature; he was made, though without sin, yet in the likeness of our sinful flesh; he has experienced our infirmities, and been tempted as we are. He will know what allowance to make for our temptations and infirmities. He will feel no prejudice against us. He will accept the sincerity of the heart and the willingness of the spirit, even though

there have been great failings through the weakneſs of the fleſh. We have nothing to fear from the ſtern ſovereignty of the Judge ; our only danger is from the intractable perverſeneſs of our own hearts. If our hearts condemn us not, we may have confidence in the day of judgment ; for every man will be accepted according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not. More or leſs will be required of every one, according as more or leſs has been committed to him. The judgment will be ſuch a full revelation of God's righteouſneſs in the diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments, that every mouth will be ſtopped, and all who are condemned will ſee themſelves guilty before God. If our hearts now condemn us, let us remember, "God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things."

The angels ſay, "This Jeſus will *come*," ſignifying, that the judgment will be held near the confines of this world. This the apoſtle more explicitly teaches. "The Lord himſelf ſhall deſcend from heaven ; the dead in Chriſt ſhall be raiſed, and at the ſame moment they who are alive ſhall be changed ; and they ſhall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." This world, which has been the place of human probation, will be the ſcene of the final judgment. When the trial ſhall be finiſhed, and the ſentence paſſed, then the oppoſite characters ſhall go away, the one to everlaſting puniſhment, the other to life eternal.

The angels farther ſay, "Jeſus ſhall ſo come, in *like manner* as ye have ſeen him go into heaven." He went up to heaven in a glorious manner ; his body was changed to a ſpiritual body ; he was attended with miniſtering angels ; a bright cloud received him, and carried him beyond the ſight

of gazing mortals. When he deſcends to judgment, he will come in a cloud, ſurrounded with the glory of his Father, and attended with an innumerable hoſt of angels; he will ſeat himſelf on his throne, and call the nations before him; he will ſeparate the righteous from the wicked with as much exactneſs, as a ſhepherd divides his ſheep from the goats; the former he will admit to the kingdom prepared for them, and will doom the latter to the place of puniſhment originally deſigned for the devil and his angels.

The final judgment of the world is the moſt ſolemn and momentous event, that we have ever heard of, as paſt, or to come. Nothing has yet occurred ſince the world began, and nothing ever will occur, while time ſhall laſt, which can in any meaſure equal this, in grandeur or importance. The reality of ſuch an event the ſcripture has affirmed on divine authority, and proved by ungainſayable arguments. The majeſty of the ſcene it has deſcribed, not with the ſtudied figures of rhetoric, but with the moſt natural and affecting ſimplicity of plain language. Deſcription can borrow no images from nature to exalt the ſcene; for in all nature there is nothing ſo grand and ſolemn, as the ſcene itſelf. The plaineſt and ſimpleſt deſcription is the moſt impreſſive; and it is this kind of deſcription, which the ſcripture has choſen.

If you would raiſe in your minds the moſt affecting and influential apprehenſions, of the judgment, go, read your bible; and attend to what you read. When you have cloſed the book and laid it by, compoſe your minds to contemplate and apply what you have read. Think on the majeſty of the judge from heaven, the ſplendor of his throne in the ſky, the myriads of at-

tending angels, the opening of the graves on every ſide, and the riſing of the dead all around you—Think on the amazing aſſembly which will be gathered before the throne—an aſſembly conſiſting of all who have ever lived, and ſhall have lived on earth, from the firſt to the laſt ſtep in the human ſucceſſion. Conceive in your minds the ſerene pleaſure, which will ſmile in the faces of ſome; and the horror and aſtoniſhment, which will be depicted in the countenances of others. Contemplate the ſtrictneſs and equity with which the characters of men will be examined, and the juſtice and impartiality with which the different iſſues will be decided. Attend to the ſolemn ſentence by which ſome will be called up to eternal glory, and others doomed to blackneſs of darkneſs for ever. Hear the triumphant ſongs of the former, and the hideous lamentations of the latter. View the heavens paſſing away with dreadful noiſe, the elements melting with fervent heat, the earth all in flames, and nature ruſhing to final diſſolution. And will you not be amazed at the ſcene?—But after all that you can imagine, the moſt affecting circumſtance ſtill remains to be ſuggeſted; you yourſelves will be perſonally preſent, and deeply concerned in the judgment; and you will then hear your everlaſting condition determined.

"Seeing, then, we look for ſuch things, what manner of perſons ought we to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs, looking for, and haſting unto the coming of the day of the Lord? Let us be diligent, that we may be found of him in peace, without ſpot and blameleſs."

Our ſubject teaches us with what meditations and affections we ſhould approach the table of the Lord, which is now ſpread before us."

Here is exhibited to us that wonderful Saviour, who once dwelt on earth—suffered death for our sins—was laid in the grave—rose from thence and ascended to glory—lives to make intercession for us, and to dispense supplies of grace to us—and will hereafter come to judge the world in righteousness, to punish the wicked with everlasting destruction from his presence, but to be glorified in the saints, and to be admired in all them who believe.

When we come to this table, we are not merely to gaze at the scene exhibited before us, or to partake of the elements presented to us. This will be no better, than if the disciples had stood gazing up into heaven, without thinking of the ends, for which their Lord had ascended thither. While we sit at the table, we are to exercise faith and love toward the Saviour, who is here represented to us. His death must impress us with a sense of the evil of our sins, and awaken in us new resolutions against them. His ascension must raise our affections to that world whither he is gone. His intercession must encourage us to draw near to God in his name. His promises of the spirit must animate us in all the labours and conflicts of the christian life. His coming to judgment must excite our diligence in every good work, that we may be found to honour and glory, when he comes.

What benefit could the disciples derive from gazing into heaven, unless by faith they looked to Jesus, who was there? As little benefit shall we derive from sitting at this table, unless we here behold by faith a dying, rising, ascending, and interceding Saviour. Looking at the table and eating the bread and drinking the wine upon it, without any spiritual views of Christ, and friendly affect-

tions to one another, is no better than gazing at the ſky. Let us therefore, in the ordinance before us, draw near to Chriſt with true hearts in the full aſſurance of faith, keep the feaſt with ſincerity and truth, eat and drink together with brotherly love, and walk worthy of him, who has called us to his kingdom and glory.

SERMON XV.

The Rainbow around the Throne.

A Communion Sermon.

REVELATION iv. 3.

And there was a Rainbow round about the Throne, in ſight like unto an emerald.

GOD is a ſpirit pure and immenſe, inviſible to human eye, and incomprehenſible to human thought. But he condeſcends to exhibit himſelf to us by ſuch figurative expreſſions and ſenſible emblems, as may give us ſome faint apprehenſions of his perfections and glories, and awaken in us ſuch ſentiments and regards, as are correſpondent to his character. To denote his knowledge, wiſdom, power and goodneſs, the ſcripture aſcribes to him human faculties and affections. To denote his ſovereign dominion, it repreſents him as ſeated on a throne, and there attended by his miniſters of ſtate. To denote the glory of his dominion, it deſcribes this throne as placed in the heavens, and encompaſſed with a

rainbow. John ſays, "I was in the ſpirit; and behold, a throne was ſet in heaven, and one ſat upon the throne. And he that ſat upon it was to look upon like a jaſper, and a ſardine ſtone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in ſight like unto an emerald." In theſe names there is an alluſion to the precious ſtones, which the eaſtern princes wore in their crowns and garments, when they appeared in their higheſt grandeur and magnificence. The rainbow about the throne is an alluſion to the token of God's covenant with Noah, and with all fleſh, that the world ſhould not be drowned by a ſecond deluge. After the patriarch's deliverance from the flood, God ſaid to him and to his ſons, "I will eſtabliſh my covenant with you, neither ſhall there be any more a flood to deſtroy the earth. And this ſhall be a token of my covenant, I do ſet my bow in the cloud, and it ſhall be a token of my covenant between me and the earth; and it ſhall come to paſs, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow ſhall be ſeen in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant." John, in a viſion, ſees the throne of God ſurrounded with the rainbow, the ancient token of his mercy to a guilty world. This figurative repreſentation denotes, that God's government is ſtill a government of grace and mercy, as well as of majeſty and power.

The emblem here exhibited may uſefully employ our preſent meditations.

1. God's being ſeated on a throne in the heavens denotes his ſupreme and univerſal government over his creatures, and his perfect knowledge of all things, which are done by them, or take place among them.

"The Lord is in the heavens, he hath done

whatſoever he pleaſed. The Lord is in his holy temple, his throne is in heaven. His eyes behold, and his eyelids try the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous, but the wicked his ſoul hateth. On the wicked he will rain an horrible tempeſt, but his countenance beholdeth the upright."

As God made the world, and all creatures in it, ſo he continually upholds them by the word of his power. A creature can no more preſerve, than it could originate its own exiſtence. God's government is univerſal; for every particular being is as dependent on him, as the creation in general.

His government extends to *moral*, as well as to animate and inanimate creatures. He treats all beings agreeably to the natures, which he has given them. He has made men capable of a moral conduct, and he exerciſes over them a moral government, and will finally judge them, as moral beings, according to their works. Innocent beings, that they may be entitled to his acceptance, muſt perſevere in their innocence. Such was originally the character of man. "He was made upright." Such was originally the condition of his acceptance. "If he obeyed God's law, he was to live by it."

But for fallen and guilty man, there is graciouſly introduced a new conſtitution adapted to his lapſed and impotent condition. Pardon, immortality and glory, through the intervention of a mediator, are procured for, and offered to this guilty creature. The terms on which he becomes entitled to theſe bleſſings, are repentance of paſt ſins, faith in the appointed redeemer, and a life devoted to God in new obedience. We are to be judged according to this conſtitution. "God

will judge the ſecrets of men according to the goſpel—according to the law of liberty." Not perfect innocence and ſinleſs obedience, but ſincere repentance and heart-purifying faith are now the terms of our admiſſion to God's eternal favour.

God, who ſits on his throne, knows the hearts of all men, and he will bring every work into judgment with every ſecret thing. To them who, by patient continuance in well doing, ſeek for glory, he will render eternal life. To them who obey not the truth, he will recompenſe indignation and wrath.

The moral government of God is juſt and perfect. Whatever complaints men may now make againſt it, the time is coming when every mouth will be ſtopped. God will reveal his righteouſneſs to the full ſatisfaction of the ſaints, and to the utter confuſion of the ungodly. The former will admire his wiſdom and grace; the latter will be ſilenced under a conviction of his holiness and juſtice.

2. John, in his viſion, had a view of the glory of God's character, exhibited in the *rainbow*, which ſurrounds his throne.

The rainbow, which is one of the moſt beautiful and majeſtic phenomena in the heavens, is aptly choſen to repreſent the glory of God. The beauty of the rainbow is the aſſemblage of all the colours in nature, in a ſoft, but ſplendid luſtre. The glory of God is the union of all conceivable perfections in one character; ſuch as power, wiſdom, goodneſs, juſtice, truth and faithfulneſs. Theſe perfections, like the colours in the bow, blend and mingle with one another.

We conſider the perfections of God ſeparately, for our narrow minds cannot view them compre-

henſively. But as they exiſt in his nature, they unite ; and as they are exerciſed in his government, they co-operate. His power is directed by wiſdom, and his wiſdom is combined with goodneſs. His goodneſs conſults the happineſs of his creatures, but in ways conſiſtent with juſtice. He never injures one of his creatures to promote the intereſt of another, or to increaſe the happineſs of a multitude. To many he gives more than they could claim ; but from none does he withhold the good, to which they are entitled. He never perverts his juſtice, violates his promiſe, or departs from the ſettled laws of his moral government in prejudice to ſome, or in partial favour to others. He inflicts puniſhment on irreclaimable offenders ; but never lays on them more than is right. And in puniſhing theſe, he has kind and benevolent ends towards his ſubjects in general. The miſery to which the incorrigible are doomed in the future world is doubtleſs intended for the greater happineſs of his moral ſyſtem. In the ſevereſt diſpenſations of his providence in this world, goodneſs operates, and happineſs is promoted. The wicked are afflicted, that they may awake to repentance, and eſcape the miſery of the world to come. The godly are chaſtiſed for their profit, that they may be made partakers of God's holineſs in a larger meaſure. As many as he loves, he rebukes and chaſtens, that they may be zealous and repent.

No one ſingle attribute, if taken by itſelf, would be glorious. The glory of his character conſiſts in the union of them all. Power without wiſdom would be blind caſual force. Wiſdom without juſtice and goodneſs would be artifice and craft. Juſtice without goodneſs would be rigour and ſeverity. Goodneſs without juſtice would be tame-

neſs. But all theſe attributes united form a complete, an amiable, a glorious character. This character is the beauty of holineſs—the beauty of the Lord, which angels admire, which ſaints love to contemplate, and in which they will ever rejoice.

It was the deſire of the Pſalmiſt, that he might dwell in the houſe of the Lord, to behold his beauty, to ſee his power and glory, and to enquire at his temple.

In this union of all perfections, God appears to be a worthy object of prayer and praiſe, of hope and love, of ſubmiſſion and obedience. On him we depend for all that we want, and to him we may go with all our requeſts. We are indebted to him for all that we enjoy, and to him we ſhould offer the ſacrifice of praiſe continually. His commands, like his nature, are holy, juſt and good, requiring nothing, but what tends to happineſs, and forbidding nothing, but what tends to miſery; and to them we may ſafely yield an implicit and unreſerved obedience. His eye beholds us in all our dangers; his mercy pities us in all our afflictions; his preſence ſurrounds us wherever we dwell; and in him we may confidently truſt in all our fears.

How happy is the good man, intereſted in the favour of ſuch a being? Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous. Let all the upright in heart ſhout for joy. No evil ſhall eventually happen to the juſt; no real good will be withheld from them, who walk uprightly.

But let ſinners tremble before him. The God who is able to ſave, is able alſo to deſtroy. He who is merciful, is alſo holy. He who loves the righteous, is angry with the wicked. He who forgives the penitent, will puniſh the bold tranſ-

greſſors. Let the guilty conſider their danger, and conſider alſo their hope. Let them hear the voice, and accept the call of mercy, leſt juſtice arreſt them, and there be none to deliver.

Some may perhaps imagine, that God's character would be more glorious, if no puniſhment were denounced againſt the ungodly, but happineſs enſured to all.

But would his kingdom appear more honorable now, if there were in it nothing but vice? Or would heaven ſeem a more excellent place, if they who love and practiſe vice were admitted into it? Does not God appear more amiable as a holy being, than in an oppoſite character? If no puniſhment were threatened to ſinners, would not wickedneſs more abound among men, and fewer be fit to enter into that world, where nothing enters that defiles?

If moral impurity be inconſiſtent with human felicity, and with the glory of God's kingdom, then the threatenings denounced againſt the finally impenitent, and the judgments executed now on a guilty world, are wiſe and juſt; for they diſplay the beauty of God's character, and conduce to the general happineſs of his moral ſubjects. Do you think, that if God's character were all goodneſs and mercy, without holineſs to reject, or juſtice to condemn the ſinner, or truth to execute his threatenings, it would be more lovely and beautiful? You greatly err. Its whole beauty would be blotted out, like the beauty of the rainbow, if but a ſingle colour remained.

Who are they, that wiſh for a God all mercy, without holineſs and truth? They are the ſame, who wiſh for a life all ſin, without repentance and virtue. It is corruption of heart and conſciouſneſs of guilt, which make men wiſh to

place God's whole glory in mercy to the excluſion of every other attribute. But let God be true, though man be condemned as a ſinner.

3. The rainbow around God's throne is an emblem of the *grace* of the goſpel diſpenſation.

The bow was anciently a ſign, that God would often ſend ſhowers to refreſh the earth, but would no more ſend floods to drown the world. The appearance of it in heaven denotes, that the throne of God is a throne of *grace*. Such the apoſtle calls it. "Let us come boldly to the *throne of grace*, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

When God brought in a flood on the world of the ungodly, he ſaved the family of righteous Noah. It hence appears, that he knows how to deliver the godly of temptation, and how to reſerve the unjuſt to the day of judgment to be puniſhed.

Though the waters of Noah will never return to cover the earth, yet judgments of different kinds are ſtill executed on guilty nations, and a day is appointed in which the world ſhall be judged in righteouſneſs, and retribution made to every man according to his works. In the mean time, God has placed us under a diſpenſation of grace, which offers pardon to the penitent, the holy ſpirit to to the humble, and eternal life to them, who patiently ſeek it. He exhibits himſelf on a throne with an emblem of mercy to invite us to him, and encourage our reliance upon him. Thither we may go in the name of Jeſus the mediator; there we may confeſs before him our guilt and corruption, and may ſupplicate his pardoning mercy and ſanctifying grace; there we may plead our impotence and miſery, and his allſufficiency, and boundleſs goodneſs; there we may fill our

mouths with arguments drawn from his love in ſending his ſon to be our Saviour—from the ſacrifice which this Saviour has offered, and the interceſſion which he is ſtill making in heaven—from the promiſes contained in his word, the mercy he has ſhewn to others, the calls he has ſent to us, and the deſires he has awakened in us. We may go to him under our doubts and fears, and pray for light to guide us and ſtrength to ſupport us. We may go to him under our temptations and dangers, and ſeek grace for our ſuccour and defence. We may go to him in ſeaſons of affliction, and tell him all our pains and ſorrows, and may plead his promiſes to the afflicted, and the conſolation given to his children in trials like ours.

How delightful muſt be a view of this throne to humble, and believing ſouls? They behold it, not as a throne of judgment ſurrounded with lightenings and flaming ſwords to puniſh the guilty, but as a throne of grace, encompaſſed with the ſoft and charming colours of the rainbow, which betoken mercy to pardon the guilty, help the impotent, comfort the afflicted, ſuccour the tempted, and ſave the humble. There is nothing to terrify and affright them from it; but every thing to invite and allure them to it.

Yea, even ſinners, awakened to a ſenſe of guilt, may there ſee hope of deliverance from the wrath to come. Thither they may reſort, and lay hold on offered pardon. From this nothing will exclude them but their own impenitence. Let them turn to God, and, however great is their guilt, he will have mercy on them, and abundantly pardon them. But if they hold faſt their iniquities and refuſe to return, ſoon the throne of mercy will to them be a throne of judgment; the rainbow will diſappear from their eyes, and an horri-

ble tempeſt will be rained on their heads. Go, then, ye ſinners, repair with penitent heart and ſuppliant voice to the throne of God, while the inviting emblem of mercy ſurrounds it.

4. The rainbow is a token of God's *faithfulneſs* to his covenant. In alluſion to its appointment as a ſign of God's covenant with Noah, John ſays, he ſaw it around God's throne in heaven.

From the beginning of the world God has dealt with men in the way of a covenant. He has promiſed them bleſſings, to be beſtowed on their performance of certain conditions. To this covenant he has always annexed ſome viſible ſymbol of his faithfulneſs. To our firſt parents there was an implied promiſe of immortality on condition of abſtinence from the interdicted fruit. As a token of this immortality ſtood the tree of life in the midſt of the garden in which they were placed. Alluding to this John ſays, "Bleſſed are they who do God's commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, which is in the midſt of the paradiſe of God."

After the apoſtacy there was the promiſe of a Saviour, who by his own death ſhould redeem men from the death brought into the world by the firſt tranſgreſſion, and who ſhould procure for the faithful a reſurrection to a glorious immortality. As a token of this covenant, ſacrifice was inſtituted. The coats of ſkin, with which our progenitors, after their lapſe, were cloathed, were doubtleſs taken from beaſts ſlain for ſacrifice; for, as fleſh was not then permitted for food, there could be no purpoſe, but ſacrifice, for which beaſts ſhould be ſlain. And we find, that the ſons of Adam brought, one the fruit of his field, and the other the firſtling of his flock, an offering to the Lord.

The covenant with Noah and his ſons, and with all fleſh, that the earth ſhould not again be depopulated by a flood, was confirmed by the ſign of the bow in the cloud.

When God renewed the covenant of grace with Abraham and his ſeed, he appointed circumciſion as its ſeal. To this, under the Moſaic diſpenſation, the paſſover was added. In the place of thoſe ſeals, baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper are inſtituted under the Chriſtian diſpenſation. Theſe refer to the blood of Chriſt, called "the blood of the covenant;" and to the ſanctifying grace of the ſpirit, called "the waſhing of regeneration, and the renewing of the holy ghoſt, which is ſhed on us through Chriſt." The deſign of theſe inſtitutions is, that we may remember God's gracious promiſe, and his faithfulneſs to perform it.

God ſays to Noah, "when I bring a cloud over the earth, I will ſet my bow in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant." This was an intimation to the patriarch and his ſons, that, when they ſaw the bow, they ſhould remember God's promiſe, and believe the fulfilment of it.

Senſible ſymbols are intended, not to remind God, but to remind *us*, of his holy covenant. When John ſays, he ſaw a rainbow round about God's throne, he ſignifies, that God is faithful to his word, and remembers the mercy which he has promiſed.

The covenant of God with men is founded in the blood of Chriſt. This has procured all the bleſſings, which the covenant contains. The inſtituted ſymbols are to lead our minds to this blood. Accordingly the elders, who ſat around the heavenly throne, beholding the grace and glory there diſplayed, are ſaid to fall down before the Lamb, and to ſing a new ſong, ſaying, "Thou

waſt ſlain and haſt redeemed us unto God by thy blood, and haſt made us kings and prieſts unto him."

David ſpeaks of God's covenant as ordered in all things and ſure. The prophet calls it "the ſure mercies of David;" or the mercies promiſed in Chriſt the ſon of David. This ſtability of the covenant is indicated in the rainbow around God's throne.

The ſame mercy, which conſtituted the covenant, will make it good. "The promiſe is by grace, to the end that it may be ſure to all the ſeed, even to them, who are of the faith of Abraham."

"The Lord is a God of truth." Men make promiſes, and fail of performing them; but "he is not a man, that he ſhould lie, nor the ſon of man, that he ſhould repent." "He is faithful; he cannot deny himſelf."

"He is the only *wiſe* God." All his counſels are formed in wiſdom, and none of them will miſcarry, like human counſels, through ignorance, incaution or want of foreſight.

"What he has promiſed, he is able to perform." Yea, "he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we aſk or think."

"With him is no variableneſs or ſhadow of turning." "His gifts and calling are without repentance;" or without change of purpoſe.

To make his *promiſe* ſure, "he has confirmed it by an *oath*, that by *two* immutable things," a *promiſe* and an *oath*, "in which it is impoſſible for God to lie, we might have a ſtrong conſolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope ſet before us."

The death of Chriſt confirms the covenant; for "it is a remembrance of the holy promiſe, the oath ſworn to Abraham."

Chriſt's blood has purchaſed the bleſſings, and ratified the promiſes of the covenant. Hence this is called the blood of the New Teſtament. Hence all God's promiſes are ſaid to be yea and amen in Chriſt.

For the ſtronger confirmation of the covenant, God has ſet his own ſeal upon it. Of old there were types prefiguring, now there are ordinances repreſenting the Saviour's death, in which the covenant is founded. In our obſervance of theſe we are to remember the faithfulneſs, and truſt the promiſes of God.

Reflections.

1. How wonderful is God's condeſcenſion in treating with us by a covenant? He not only lays us under obligations to him by his commands, but himſelf under obligations to *us* by his promiſes. If, in his abſolute ſovereignty, he had given us a law, required our obedience, and left us in a ſtate of uncertainty, whether he would forgive our ſins, help our infirmities, and remunerate our ſervices, ſtill there would be great reaſon why we ſhould ſtudy to approve ourſelves in his ſight. But he has not placed us in ſuch a doubtful and anxious ſituation. He has dealt with us, rather as a father, than as a ſovereign. He has not only inſtructed us what is his acceptable will, but ſtated to us the different conſequences of obeying, and of oppoſing it. While he injoins duty, he promiſes favour. Though we are unworthy of the ſmalleſt, he gives us a claim to the richeſt reward.

2. How happy is the condition of thoſe who by faith are intereſted in God's covenant.

They are entitled to every bleſſing, which they can deſire, for every bleſſing is promiſed by a faithful God. Though they may ſeem to have

nothing, yet they have all things either in poſſeſſion, or in promiſe. They are now in peace with God, free from condemnation, led by the Spirit, and entitled to heaven. Afflictions work for their good, death will be their gain, glory their reward, God is, and ever will be their portion. They inherit all things.

3. We ſee how we are to judge, whether the bleſſings promiſed are ours. We muſt enquire, whether we have conſented to the conditions of them. God is faithful to his promiſes; but his faithfulneſs is no ſecurity to thoſe, who reject the terms on which the promiſes are made. Have we repented of our ſins? Have we put ourſelves under the law to Chriſt? Do we bring forth the fruits of repentance, and perform the works of faith? Then pardon and life are ours. Thus we are to ſeek for glory; thus we may appropriate the comforts of hope. But if under conſcious guilt we ſeek relief by applying the promiſes without attending to the conditions, we heal our hurt ſlightly, and the wound will break out again with enraged pain and augmented danger.

4. The mercy diſplayed in the goſpel teaches us to put on humbleneſs of mind.

Between the conditions and the promiſes of the covenant there is a ſure connection; but this is founded, not in the merit of the conditions, but in the gracious conſtitution of God. He forgives our ſins on repentance, not becauſe repentance deſerves forgiveneſs, but becauſe he is abundant in goodneſs. He gives his ſpirit to them who aſk it, not becauſe prayer deſerves the favour, but becauſe he pities unworthy and helpleſs creatures. Where is boaſting then? It is excluded. Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord.

Come then, let us repair to the throne of God,

which we behold encompaſſed with tokens of grace and mercy, faithfulneſs and truth. Let us fall down before it in deep repentance of ſin, and receive the offered pardon with all the energies of fervent deſire, active faith and flowing gratitude. "Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn to the Lord, who will have mercy on him, and abundantly pardon him."

SERMON XVI.

No Temple in Heaven.

A Sermon preached on the first Lord's Day after the Dedication of a New Meeting-House.

REVELATION xxi. 22.

And I saw no Temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it.

SAINT JOHN, in the preceding verses, describes the heavenly state as a spacious city, in some respects, resembling the ancient *Jerusalem*, but far more glorious, so that it may be called the *new* Jerusalem.

As heaven cannot, at present, be made visible to us, it is represented by images taken from things which are visible. That our conceptions of it may be raised as high as imagination can ascend, the images are borrowed from objects the most magnificent of any, with which mortals are acquainted; and in the figurative representations such circumstances of splendor and majesty are com-

bined, as never have been known to exiſt together on earth.

John had a proſpect of this city from a great and high mountain, to which he was carried in the Spirit. The city was illuminated, not by the beams of the natural ſun, but by the immediate preſence of God. It had a wall great and high for ſecurity and defence. It had twelve gates, with angels for their guards, three gates on each ſide, ſo that it was acceſſible to qualified ſubjects from all nations, and from all quarters of the globe. On the gates were written the names of the twelve *tribes* of the *children* of *Iſrael*, to ſignify, that thoſe, who were to be admitted as citizens, were only the true worſhippers of God; not idolaters and infidels. On the foundations were inſcribed the names of the twelve *apoſtles* of the *Lamb*, denoting, that the *Jewiſh* and *Chriſtian* churches were united in one, and builded together on the foundation of the apoſtles and prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner-ſtone." To expreſs the beauty and proportion of the city, it is ſaid to lie four ſquare, and its walls and buildings to be every where of the ſame magnificence and ſymmetry. It was ornamented with all manner of precious ſtones, reſembling thoſe in the breaſtplate of the high prieſt. This circumſtance teaches us, that in heaven the oracles of God will be communicated in the cleareſt light and in full perfection.

After ſuch a glorious deſcription of the city, we ſhould naturally expect, that the writer would next proceed to exhibit the elegance and grandeur of the *Temple*. But, inſtead of deſcribing the temple, he ſays, "He ſaw none there." But why? Could there be ſuch a large, opulent, and populous city, and no temple in it for the worſhip

of God? How came this important appendage of a city to be omitted? John aſſigns the reaſon. "The Lord God Almighty, and Jeſus Chriſt the Lamb of God are its Temple." The whole city is the temple of God, for he is every where preſent; he every where manifeſts his glory; he is every where worſhipped and adored. "It hath no need of the ſun or moon to ſhine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." All who are ſaved walk continually in this light. The city is the centre of all glory and honour. The wicked and ungodly are excluded from it. None are admitted, but ſuch as are pure and holy; ſuch as follow the Lamb, and are written in his book of life.

When John ſays, "He ſaw no temple in the heavenly city," he ſignifies, that uſually there are, and always there ought to be temples in *earthly* cities. For he mentions this as a circumſtance of peculiarity, by which the city in heaven is remarkably diſtinguiſhed from cities on earth.

The perfection of God's character entitles him to the love, reverence and homage of all his intelligent creatures. As we are dependent upon him for all that we need, and indebted to him for all that we enjoy, it becomes us to direct our deſires and our gratitude to him, and to expreſs theſe inward ſentiments by outward acts of prayer and praiſe. Wherever men are collected together in a ſtate of ſociety, they are bound to unite in the worſhip of their common creator and benefactor. Social worſhip cements their union, ſtrengthens their reciprocal affection, and gives action and energy to thoſe virtues, which are the life and felicity of all communities.

General happineſs is the end of ſociety. Men aſſociate, becauſe it is not good to be alone. The

happineſs of *this* world is with many ; but the happineſs of the *future* world ought to be with all, the grand object of the ſocial union. In a ſtate of ſociety, by mutual communication and aſſiſtance, each one can make thoſe ſcientific, moral and ſpiritual improvements, which would be unattainable in a ſtate of ſolitude. It is not merely for our temporal convenience, but eſpecially for our future happineſs, that God has appointed us to live in ſociety.

The foundation of religion is a belief of the exiſtence, and a reverence for the character of God. We may ſee evidence of his being, power and goodneſs in his works. But this evidence few would regard, without ſome ſpecial means to call their attention to it. He has therefore given us the word of revelation, which exhibits his character in a clear, but gentle light, ſtates our various duties with perſpicuity, and urges them with impreſſive arguments ; and he has inſtituted ſocial worſhip as a ſtanding mean of religious knowledge, internal piety, and ſocial virtue.

There is the ſame reaſon, why communities ſhould worſhip God in their ſocial connexion, as why particular perſons ſhould worſhip him in their individual capacity. If each man ought to have a cloſet, to which he may retire and pray to his Father who ſees in ſecret, the ſociety ought to have a temple, in which all the members may aſſemble to call on their common protector and benefactor.

Even the heathens had temples in their cities for the worſhip of their imaginary divinities. It was a common ſentiment, that there were inviſible powers, on which they were dependent, and to which they were indebted ; and it was a natural inference, that joint adoration ſhould be paid to theſe powers, and temples erected for the purpoſe.

The great Jehovah, when he revealed himſelf to men, as the ſupreme and the only true God, inſtituted ſocial worſhip, and required the erection of temples, in which his votaries might aſſemble to pay homage and adoration to him, and to receive inſtructions and bleſſings from him. It is his command, "Build me a ſanctuary, that I may dwell among you." And this is the promiſe which accompanies it; "In every place, where I record my name, I will come unto you, and bleſs you."

In our preſent imperfect ſtate, while we dwell in material bodies, are ſurrounded with ſenſible objects and receive our knowledge through corporeal organs, ſuch external means are neceſſary. Thoſe holy tempers and ſpiritual affections, which are the eſſence of religion, muſt be founded in knowledge; and religious, as well as natural knowledge, muſt be communicated to us through the bodily ſenſes. Hence God has inſtituted certain forms of worſhip adapted to the ſight and hearing; and has directed us to ſequeſter certain places, where theſe inſtituted forms may be obſerved, that, by means of them, our minds may be enlightened, our knowledge improved, and pious and holy diſpoſitions brought into action.

But in heaven the caſe will be otherwiſe. There we ſhall ſubſiſt in a different manner—without theſe groſs bodies, and without theſe ſenſitive organs; and conſequently we ſhall not need theſe viſible and ſenſible forms of worſhip, which we find ſo neceſſary here. Hence John ſays, "In heaven he ſaw no temple;" for heaven was all temple, and the glory of God filled it every where alike.

We will attend to this thought. "Social worſhip is an employment in heaven; but no temple is there."

1. There is no *material* temple in heaven.

The angels are ſpirits, pure and active as flames of fire. The ſaints, in the ſeparate ſtate, will dwell there without bodies. After the reſurrection, they will have bodies; but theſe will be faſhioned like to Chriſt's glorious body. What kind of bodies they will be, we have no exact conception; but we know, they will be exceedingly diverſe from theſe which we now poſſeſs. The apoſtle tells us, "They are ſown in corruption, diſhonour and weakneſs; but will be raiſed in incorruption, glory and power. They are ſown natural; but will be raiſed ſpiritual bodies." The preſent organs of ſenſation they will not need; for they will have faculties of perception and communication, more refined, exalted and comprehenſive. They will be all eye—all ear—all intellect.

Our ſenſes of ſight and hearing muſt be inconceivable to perſons born blind and deaf. The faculties of ſaints in glory are inconceivable to us, who have no inlets of knowledge, but the avenues of the ſenſes. But to ſuppoſe, that they can have no faculties more perfect than ours, would be as abſurd, as if a man born blind ſhould judge, that there was no way to acquire the knowledge of ſenſible objects, but by feeling; or one born deaf ſhould conclude, that there could be no intercourſe between man and man, but by ſigns.

In the heavenly world, where the worſhippers are all ſpiritual beings, without any ſuch groſs bodies as theſe, in which we dwell, there will be no need of temples conſtructed of timber, ſtone and earthly materials, like theſe, in which we aſſemble for worſhip. We are ſtruck with the grandeur, and pleaſed with the beauty of a magnificent and elegant temple. The ſight of it elevates the thoughts, and aſſiſts the ſpirit of devo-

tion. But it bears no compariſon with, and no real reſemblance to that glorious place called heaven, where ſaints and angels pay their devotions. Every thing there is adapted, not to pleaſe the eyes, but to gratify the refined taſte of pure and holy minds.

2. In heaven there are no *local* temples.

Here on earth we erect one temple in this place, and another in that, to accommodate ſuch a number of people, as can conveniently aſſemble to worſhip in it.

The Jews had only one temple for the whole nation. In this they aſſembled three times a year to celebrate the principal feſtivals inſtituted in the law. The attendance of thoſe, who lived in the remote parts of the country, was tedious and laborious. But yet pious people cheerfully ſubmitted to the fatigue, that they might enjoy the ſublime pleaſure of appearing before God. Alluding to the national attendance at the temple in Jeruſalem, the Pſalmiſt ſays, "Bleſſed are they who dwell in thine houſe; bleſſed is the man whoſe ſtrength is in thee; in whoſe heart are the ways of them, who, paſſing through the valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain alſo filleth the pools. They go from ſtrength to ſtrength; every one of them appeareth before God in Zion."

Beſide the three annual feſtivals, there were daily ſacrifices offered at certain hours, both morning and evening, at the temple. At theſe hours, which were hours of prayer, they, who lived near to the temple, attended there; ſuch as lived remote, prayed with their faces toward the temple.

For the weekly worſhip of the ſabbath, there were ſynagogues built in every conſiderable city, town and village; and here the people met to hear the law, and to unite in prayer. In the

Chriſtian world the caſe is ſimilar. There muſt be churches erected in various places, at ſuitable diſtances, for the accommodation of all, who wiſh to unite in ſocial devotion.

In heaven there will be no occaſion for theſe local ſanctuaries; all heaven may be one temple. The worſhippers are not confined to particular places, nor in their motions from place to place are they retarded by cumbrous bodies. When they move, they fly; when they fly, they fly ſwiftly. They are like flames of fire; like a flaſh of lightning. They are not obliged to gather around, and attend to particular teachers for inſtruction. As all are learners, ſo all are teachers, all prieſts, all miniſtering ſpirits. The heavenly city is one ſpacious temple, and the heavenly inhabitants are one vaſt congregation, and in the worſhip of God they ſpend one eternal ſabbath. In the mount Zion above, the innumerable company of angels and ſpirits of juſt men made perfect are one general aſſembly; one univerſal church. When John, in viſion, had a view of the heavenly worſhip, "he heard the voice of many ſaints and angels round about the throne of God, and the number of them was ten thouſand times ten thouſands, and thouſands of thouſands. Yea, every creature in heaven and earth heard he, ſaying, Bleſſing and honour and glory be unto him that ſitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."

3. In heaven there are no *ſeparate* and no *party* temples. The inhabitants of populous towns and cities on earth divide into different aſſemblies, and build different temples, becauſe they are too numerous to be accommodated in one. But the inhabitants of the heavenly city, though vaſtly more numerous and more zealous than mortals on earth, can meet in one aſſembly, and all worſhip together, without confuſion or interruption.

Chriſtians, in this imperfect ſtate, often form themſelves into diſtinct ſocieties, not becauſe they are too numerous, but becauſe they are too uncharitable to worſhip in the ſame houſe. Differing, perhaps immaterially, in doctrinal ſentiments, or ceremonial uſages, they call themſelves by different names, and attend on the ordinances of God in different places. In heaven there can be no ſuch cauſes of ſeparation. All are of one mind; of one accord. Charity never fails. Selfiſhneſs never predominates. There is no jealouſy or diſtruſt; no pride or envy; no ſelf-will or contempt of others; no diſpoſition to withdraw from, or to exclude one another. Angels diſdain not to worſhip in the ſame aſſembly with men. The higheſt ſaints think not themſelves too great or too good to be fellow members with the loweſt of their brethren. All are one in affection. All mind the ſame things.

4. Heaven is all one temple, becauſe the glory of God fills it every where. John ſays, He ſaw no temple; no diſtinct temple; for God and the Lamb are the temple.

In the temple of Solomon there was a viſible glory, which reſted on the mercy-ſeat between the Cherubims. This is ſometimes called the bright cloud, the pillar of fire, the glory of God, the excellent glory. It was an emblem of God's preſence. From this glory, when God was conſulted in behalf of his people, oracles were given by an audible voice. God is ſaid to dwell between the Cherubims, becauſe between them, on the mercy-ſeat in the temple, was the reſidence of that glorious luſtre, which betokened his preſence. This ſeems to have been a prefiguration of the perſonal appearance of Jeſus Chriſt, the brightneſs of God's glory in the ſecond temple. In this reſpect, the

glory of the latter temple, was greater than the glory of the former.

To the visible glory, which was in Solomon's temple, John alludes in our text. He saw no such temple in heaven; no temple illuminated, as that was, by an emblem of God's presence in one particular place; nothing, which should give one spot a pre-eminence above all others; for God himself and the Lamb were the temple. The glory of God, and the loveliness of the Redeemer appeared every where, throughout all heaven. There was no spot, but what was all lovely; all glorious; full of God and goodness; full of Christ and grace. Every thing displayed, every heart admired, every tongue praised the Great Jehovah and the Divine Redeemer. All was devotion; all was gratitude; all was admiration and love.

Hence John adds, "The city had no need of the sun or moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof, and the nations of them that are saved, walk in the light of it." All the numerous inhabitants of heaven continually behold the light of that glory, which God and the Redeemer spread through the place.

Christian temples have not in them that visible emblem of divine glory, which was exhibited in the ancient temple; nor does God, now, as he did formerly, answer the prayers and enquiries of his people with an audible voice from the excellent glory. But in Christian temples he displays his glory more clearly, instructs us in his will more fully, and communicates his grace more plentifully, and yet in a more easy and gentle manner, than he did in his ancient temple. In these last days, he speaks to us by his son in the preaching of the gospel; through him he sheds forth

the Spirit abundantly ; and through him with confidence we may come and obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. In his ſanctuary he makes thoſe manifeſtations of himſelf, which we can meet no where elſe. But in heaven we ſhall no more need to reſort to particular temples, that we may behold God's glory, learn his will, and enjoy his preſence ; for through all heaven he will manifeſt himſelf in a manner adapted, and in a meaſure proportioned to the capacities of all holy beings. "Here we ſee through a glaſs darkly ; there we ſhall ſee face to face. Here we know but in part ; there we ſhall know as we are known."

In ſcripture the happineſs of the heavenly ſtate is expreſſed by our ſeeing God—ſeeing him as he is—beholding his face—dwelling in his preſence. Theſe phraſes import ſuch a clear knowledge of his character, ſtrong perception of his glory, and full enjoyment of his favour, as our preſent capacity, can neither admit nor ſuſtain. No man can ſee his face and live. That view of his glory, which the ſaints in heaven enjoy, would have overwhelmed them in their feeble ſtate of mortality. The glory of Chriſt's transfiguration on the mount Moſes and Elias could bear ; but the three diſciples ſank under it. God now holds back the face of his throne, leſt his glory, burſting upon us in a flood of light, ſhould confound and deſtroy us. But that glory, which would be too mighty for us here, will be our felicity and joy hereafter. "In God's preſence is fulneſs of joy ; at his right hand are pleaſures for evermore." When we ſhall hereafter awake in his likeneſs, then we may behold his face in righteouſneſs. When he ſhall raiſe us to glory, he will be the ſtrength of our heart, and our portion forever.

Let us now attend to the reflections, which arise from our subject.

1. We see what use we should make of God's temple below. Here we are to acquire a preparation for that city, in which is no temple.

Heaven is a holy place; and without holiness none can enter into it. God's presence is the glory of heaven; without a conformity to his character, we cannot come into his presence, nor behold his glory. By men of corrupt and vicious minds—by men who are enemies to God and holiness—by men who covet nothing but earthly glory, and relish nothing but sensual pleasure, what beauty can be seen, and what happiness enjoyed, in that holy place, and in that glorious presence? God has instituted the worship of his temple here below, that by our attendance upon it we may be formed to a capacity of beholding the glory and enjoying the felicity of the world above. Here his law is pronounced, that we may see our corruption and guilt. Here is character is exhibited, that we may be convinced of our enmity to him and demerit from him. Here his grace is proclaimed, that we may be encouraged to seek pardon by repentance, and to implore his Spirit for our renovation. Here the glories and the terrors of the future world are displayed, that we may be awakened to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life. Here we are called to the exercises of holy devotion, that we may be habituated to, and qualified for the sublime employments of heaven. When we come to God's house, we are to banish all sinful passions, and invite into our souls spiritual and benevolent affections, that we may be meet to enter into that holy city, where all is goodness and love, and nothing which disturbs or defiles.

2. We ſee how Chriſtian ſocieties on earth may beſt reſemble the heavenly city.

In that city, it is ſaid, there is no temple, becauſe the city itſelf is all one temple. God is regarded and worſhipped every where, and his glory is every where diſplayed. Such, in ſome meaſure, ſhould be the church of God on earth.

As we cannot ſpend our whole time, in ſocial worſhip, nor aſſociate for worſhip, unleſs there be ſome *known* time and place, in which we may meet together, God has been pleaſed to inſtitute in his word a particular day, and to point out in his providence particular places, for this ſacred purpoſe. But ſtill a Chriſtian ſociety may, like the heavenly city, be all temple. The apoſtle ſays to the Epheſians, "Ye are fellow citizens with the ſaints and of the houſehold of God, and are built on the foundation of the apoſtles and prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner ſtone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord, in whom alſo ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Let religion be maintained in every family; let the ſcriptures be ſtatedly read, and prayer and praiſe daily offered in every dwelling; let there be piety and benevolence in every heart; let there be juſtice, peace and charity in all ſocial intercourſe; let the holineſs which becomes God's houſe be carried into the concerns of the world; let the fear of God influence the common buſineſs of life; and then the ſociety is all temple; the church itſelf is a ſanctuary; for God's name is glorified every where, the good and holy effects of the temple worſhip are every where ſpread and diffuſed, and the ſociety below reſembles the ſociety above.

The reaſon why God calls us to worſhip him in

his temple, is that at all times, and in all places, we may maintain a ſenſe of his preſence, and act as ſeeing him who is inviſible. If we are devout only on the ſabbath, and profane at other times; if we are grave and ſerious only in the houſe of God; and light and vain in our own houſes; if we are peaceable and orderly in religious aſſemblies only; and unjuſt, paſſionate and contentious in our ordinary intercourſe with men; if we aſſume airs of piety when we meet for divine worſhip; but are artful and intriguing, when we meet for civil purpoſes; we bely our profeſſion and contradict our aſſumed character; and our attendance in the houſe of God brings to him no honour, and to our ſouls no benefit. "Truſt not in lying words, ſaying, The temple of the Lord are theſe; but amend your ways and doings." If ye ſtand before God in his houſe, and indulge iniquity elſewhere, you make his worſhip an abomination. The reaſon why you are to worſhip God in his temple, to ſuppreſs evil paſſions and to cultivate holy and benevolent tempers there, is that you may do the ſame every where, and at all times.

When a people, by united attendance in the temple acquire the true ſpirit of the goſpel, and carry this ſpirit with them into their families, into their private conduct and into their ſocial intercourſe, then the ſociety is like heaven. It is all one holy temple in the Lord.

3. Our ſubject teaches us, how to form an opinion of our meetneſs for heaven. We muſt examine ourſelves whether we have the temper, in which the happineſs of heaven conſiſts.

Though there be no particular or local temple there, yet there is ſocial worſhip, and this worſhip is conducted with devotion, humility and

love. There is deep reverence of God's majesty, rapturous admiration of his perfections and works, delightful adoration and praise, and mutual condescension and benevolence among the worshippers. Do we in any degree find these tempers here? These are the marks and characters of those, whom God approves on earth, and whom he will admit to his presence above. "Blessed are they that do his commandments; they have a right to the tree of life, and shall enter through the gates into the city. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable shall be cast out, and shall have their part in the lake, which burns with fire and brimstone. This is the second death.

4. We learn, that in all our approaches to God, we must regard Christ Jesus as the mediator through whom we obtain admission and find acceptance. John says, "God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of heaven."

Christ is honored in heaven as the Lamb of God, who by his sacrifice has expiated the guilt of a sinful world. He appears there as a Lamb, that has been slain. Praises are there sung by the saints, not only to him who sits on the throne, but also to the Lamb, who has redeemed them, and made them kings and priests unto God. "He is there glorified in the saints, and admired in all them who believe." They remember, that to him they are indebted for all the felicity which they enjoy, and for all the glory to which they are exalted. "He is glorified in them, and they in him." That our worship may resemble the heavenly worship, we must pay honour to this glorious mediator; we must remember his dying love, embrace him by humble faith, rejoice in the salvation which he has purchased, and ascribe to the virtue of his blood all that we enjoy, and all that we hope to

enjoy. If he is honoured in heaven, let us honour him on earth. If angels adore him for his benevolence to men, let men adore him for his benevolence to them. No forms of worſhip are of any value in the ſight of God, if the Redeemer, whom he has ſent, be forgotten and diſregarded. If we believe in God, let us believe alſo in Chriſt. If we honour the Father, let us likewiſe honour the ſon. "For we are redeemed by the precious blood of Chriſt, who was manifeſted in theſe laſt times for us, who by him believe in God, that raiſed him from the dead and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God."

SERMON XVII.

Univerſal Praiſe for Redemption.

A Communion Sermon.

ISAIAH xliv. 23.

Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it: Shout, ye lower parts of the earth: Break forth into ſinging, ye mountains, O foreſt, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himſelf in Iſrael.

THE deliverance of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, which is often a ſubject of Iſaiah's predictions, ſo nearly reſembled, in ſeveral circumſtances, the redemption of mankind by Jeſus Chriſt, that the prophet ſeldom mentions the former, without feeling his mind enlivened with a view of the latter; and he rarely diſmiſſes the one without giving a rapturous diſplay of the other. In his predictions of that deliverance he uſually mingles ſome elevated expreſſions, which can properly be applied only to the great redemption. Hence the writers of the New Teſtament ſo often borrow *his* language as deſcriptive of their own times.

That the words of our text reſpect the goſpel diſpenſation, is probable from the prophet's calling on *all* creatures in heaven and earth to join in ſongs of praiſe for God's wonderful mercy. The deliverance of the Jews from Babylon by Cyrus was an event, which peculiarly concerned *them*. The redemption of mankind from ſin by Jeſus Chriſt is a work, in which *all nations* are concerned, and in which *angels* feel themſelves intereſted. From this they learn the manifold wiſdom of God.

The prophet invites the heavens, the earth, the mountains, the foreſts, and every tree, to break forth into ſinging, becauſe the Lord hath redeemed Jacob. It is uſual with the prophets thus to awaken the attention of rational beings by addreſſes to inanimate nature.

We may obſerve,

I. Th e benefit here celebrated is *Redemption*.

This ſuppoſes a ſtate of guilt and bondage.

Redemption is often applied to *temporal* deliverances. But here it intends a *ſpiritual* deliverance, or ſalvation from the dominion and demerit of ſin by the grace of God through the atonement of Chriſt. So the meaning of it is ſtated in the preceding verſe. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy tranſgreſſions, and as a cloud thy ſins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee."

Redemption includes the forgiveneſs of ſins in this world, and eternal life in the other. The apoſtle ſpeaks of a redemption, which conſiſts in the remiſſion of ſins; and of a redemption of the body from the bondage of corruption. Theſe two privileges are connected. Forgiveneſs, which is a diſcharge from our obligation to puniſhment, is accompanied with a title to future happineſs. "Whom God juſtifies, them he alſo glorifies."

The law of God condemns thoſe, who continue not in all things written in it. As we have all tranſgreſſed this law, we are all condemned by it. Forgiveneſs frees us from condemnation, and brings us into a ſtate of favour with God. "Being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Forgiveneſs, in the nature of it, implies a title to glory. Man was made to exiſt forever. The death threatened to diſobedience intends, not a ceſſation of being, but poſitive puniſhment. The remiſſion of this puniſhment imports an oppoſite ſtate; not exemption from miſery by annihilation, but a title to a happy immortality. "As ſin has reigned unto death, ſo grace reigns through righteouſneſs unto eternal life."

This redemption comes to men through the blood of Chriſt. "We have redemption through his blood."

The mercy of God is inclined to forgive ſinners. But the wiſdom of God ſaw fit to beſtow forgiveneſs in a way, which ſhould diſplay his righteouſneſs. "He ſet forth his ſon a propitiation for ſin, to declare his righteouſneſs for the forgiveneſs of ſins, that he might be juſt, and the juſtifier of them who believe."

"Chriſt was manifeſted to bear our ſins; and *in him was no ſin.*" This character of Chriſt ſhews the excellency of his ſacrifice. "Such an high-prieſt became us, who is holy, harmleſs and undefiled, and made higher than the heavens; and who needed not, as the ancient prieſts, to offer ſacrifice firſt for his own ſins, and then for the ſins of the people; for this he did once, when he offered up himſelf."

Our redemption is aſcribed to Chriſt's *blood*—to

his death on the croſs. But to accompliſh our redemption the holineſs of his life was neceſſary; for without this, there could be no atoning efficacy in his death.

The redemption purchaſed by Chriſt, though offered without diſtinction, is actually beſtowed only on penitent and believing ſouls. Hence the call in the words preceding the text, "*Return unto me*, for I have redeemed thee." "The Redeemer comes to thoſe, who turn from ungodlineſs in Jacob." It is by ſin, that we have fallen under condemnation. It is by repentance, that we obtain redemption. "Chriſt bare our ſins, that we, being dead to ſin, ſhould live unto righteouſneſs." He came to redeem us from iniquity, and to purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The apoſtles proclaimed a free and gracious ſalvation; but they ſtated the terms of it to be "repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jeſus Chriſt."

To our compliance with theſe terms, the operation of the divine Spirit on our hearts is neceſſary. Hence believers and penitents are ſaid, to be "born of the Spirit"—"renewed by the holy Ghoſt"—"created in Chriſt Jeſus to good works." But ſtill ſinners are required to repent and turn to God, to make them a new heart, and to walk in God's ſtatutes, as if all this were their own work.

Wherever God ſends the goſpel, he ſends his Spirit to accompany it. Hence it is called a miniſtration of the Spirit, and they who oppoſe it are ſaid to reſiſt the Spirit. They, who attend on the miniſtration of the word, actually receive the Spirit in his convincing and awakening influence. The Galatians are ſaid to have "received the Spirit in the hearing of faith."

An attendance on appointed means, and an improvement of divine excitements are required in order to the obtaining of that grace, which will be effectual to repentance and converſion. "Aſk and ye ſhall receive, ſeek and ye ſhall find. God gives his Spirit to them who aſk him. To him who hath ſhall more be given." It is not pretended, that there is any certain connexion between the endeavours of ſinners, and renovating grace; for who can ſay, He has not often abuſed and forfeited the grace of God already? But yet it is plain, that God ordinarily beſtows his renewing grace on ſinners, only when they are found in the diligent obſervance of his appointments. Hence Chriſtians are ſaid to be begotten and born of the *word*, as well as of the Spirit. As the grace of God uſually works in men's hearts by means of the word, ſo they are moſt likely to receive this grace, when they are in the diligent uſe, not when they are in the contemptuous neglect of theſe means.

Hence we may obſerve,

II. Our redemption is a *Divine Work.* The LORD hath redeemed Jacob.

It was God, who, in his unſearchable wiſdom, laid the *plan* of our ſalvation. It originated, not with us, but with him. It was the effect, not of our ſolicitation, but of his ſelfmoving goodneſs. As God is the Being diſhonoured by our revolt, ſo to him only it belongs to determine, whether we may be received to his favour. This important queſtion no created intelligence could anſwer. God has a right to puniſh offenders; whether he will recede from this right, he only can tell. The knowledge, which *angels* have on this ſubject, comes to them by divine diſcovery; not by their own ſagacity. They deſire to look into this glo-

rious ſcheme, and hence they learn the manifold wiſdom of God.

As the plan, ſo the *purchaſe* of ſalvation is from God. It was he, who ſent a Saviour into the world, ſealed his heavenly miſſion, appointed him to be a ſacrifice, raiſed him from the dead, and gave him glory. Chriſt ſays, "He came from God; and came to do the will of God who ſent him." It was this miſſion, which gave efficacy to Chriſt's ſacrifice, and which is the ground of our faith in his atonement. "We are redeemed by the precious blood of Chriſt, who was *ordained* before the foundation of the world, and was manifeſted in theſe laſt times for us, who *by him* do believe in *God*, who raiſed him from the dead and gave him glory, that our *faith and hope* might be *in God*."

The *terms* of our acceptance are from God. Had it been declared in general, that ſalvation is attainable, yet none could thence aſcertain the *condition* of it—whether repentance be ſufficient, or ſome harder condition be required. Hence heathens, who had no direct information on the ſubject, have anxiouſly enquired, wherewith they ſhould come before the Lord; whether they ſhould bring flocks of ſacrifice, floods of oil, or the blood of their offſpring. But God has ſhewed us what is good. He has required that we repent of ſins which are paſt, and that we walk humbly and righteouſly with him in future.

The *means* of ſalvation are from God. It is not owing to the will of man, but to the grace of God, that a revelation is vouchſafed to the world. It is not owing to our previous choice, but to his ſovereign pleaſure, that we are placed under the advantages of this revelation.

The Spirit, who is an agent in our ſalvation, by renewing us to repentance, and by preſerving us to eternal life, is wholly a divine gift. "By grace we are ſaved through faith; not of ourſelves; it is the gift of God: for we are his workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus to good works."

We proceed to obſerve,

III. The plan of redemption, which God has laid, will ultimately redound to his glory. "The Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and *glorified himſelf* in Iſrael."

In this ſcheme God has made a glorious diſplay of his *grace* and *mercy*. "He hath predeſtinated us to the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt, according to the good pleaſure of his will, to the praiſe of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." That God is good, we learn from his works of providence; but that he is gracious and merciful to pardon offenders, we learn only from his word, and eſpecially from the goſpel diſpenſation. Here we ſee the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindneſs to us by Jeſus Chriſt. Here we ſee him contriving the redemption of fallen men, and for this purpoſe adopting a method, which fills heaven with aſtoniſhment. Here we ſee him ſending down from the realms of glory his own divine ſon, to aſſume our nature—to dwell among mortals—to work wonders before their eyes—to proclaim the offers, and ſtate the terms of pardon and life—to walk before them in the path of truth and righteouſneſs, and return back to heaven by the way of the grave, there to act as an advocate for humble ſouls, and there to prepare manſions for their reception, that they may dwell with him forever.

Good God; what condeſcenſion is here? Why

didſt thou take ſo ſingular a method for the ſalvation of ſo unworthy a creature? Why this preference of apoſtate man to the fallen angels? It is ſo, Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight.

What confidence, my fellow ſinners, we may place in God's mercy. What aſſurance we have of his pardon on our humble ſubmiſſion to his Son. Hereby perceive we the love of God, becauſe he ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that he might die for us, and that we might live through him. "Kiſs ye the Son, leſt he be angry, and ye periſh from the way."

In this great work God has glorified his *holineſs*, *truth* and *juſtice*. He delights not in the death of the wicked: but he will not violate his truth, tarniſh his holineſs, nor bend the rectitude of his government for their ſalvation. When he ſhews mercy, he will act like himſelf. He will not pardon ſinners without a public teſtimony of the perfection of his law, the equity of his government, and the purity of his nature, leſt his ſubjects, preſuming on his lenity, be tempted to rebel. He will diſplay his own glorious character, that pardoned offenders may fear to offend again, and that all intelligent beings may behold, adore and revere him. When his beloved Son put himſelf in our place to bear our iniquities and expiate our guilt, it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him, and put him to grief. Thus all may ſee, how offenſive ſin is to God; and how incompatible with the happineſs of the creature. If God ſpared not his own ſon, when he made his ſoul an offering for our ſins, ſurely he will not ſpare thoſe contemptuous ſinners, who, rejecting this wonderful ſacrifice, are doomed to ſuffer for their own ſins. "If ſuch things were done in a green tree, what will be done in the dry?

In this diſpenſation God has abounded to us in all *wiſdom* and *prudence*. No wiſdom, but the divine, could deviſe a way, in which ſin ſhould be condemned, and the ſinner pardoned—in which God's juſtice and holineſs ſhould be diſplayed, and his grace and mercy exerciſed toward the guilty. Here we ſee righteouſneſs and grace united, and acting in concert. "Mercy and truth are met together; juſtice and peace have kiſſed each other. Truth ſprings from the earth, and righteouſneſs looks down from heaven. The Lord gives grace and glory. His ſalvation is nigh to them that fear him, and glory dwells on the earth. He ſpeaks peace to his people; but let them not turn again to folly."

God glorifies himſelf in true *believers*. His grace is diſplayed in arreſting their once guilty progreſs; in awakening their attention to their ſalvation; in renewing them to repentance; in forgiving their ſins; in ſanctifying them to his ſervice, and in preſerving them amidſt a thouſand dangers unto eternal life. In them the ſovereignty of his grace, the riches of his mercy, the power of his Spirit, the truth of his word, the faithfulneſs of his promiſes, and the divine excellency of religion are clearly manifeſted. They glorify him by works of holineſs, by faith in his promiſes, by a profeſſion of his name, by conſtancy in his ſervice, and by zeal to promote his cauſe, and to ſpread the influence of his religion. He will be glorified in them, and they in him, when they ſhall appear before the preſence of his glory with exceeding joy. Then the wonders of his grace, and the myſteries of his providence toward them will be unfolded. Then it will be ſeen, how all things have been working for their good, and the things which ſeemed to be againſt them, were in-

tended for their ſalvation. Then it will be known, how immutable has been God's covenant with them, and how rich is his munificence in rewarding their poor ſervice with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

God will finally be glorified in them, who *reject* the goſpel. Theſe, when Chriſt ſhall be revealed from heaven, will be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Then the guilt of the impenitent, and the equity of the judgment will be manifeſted, every vain excuſe will be ſilenced, and every mouth will be ſtopped. Then it will appear, to the conviction of all, that God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, bountiful in the rewards which he beſtows, and juſt in the puniſhments which he executes.

We may obſerve, once more, fourthly,

IV. That the prophet, contemplating the glorious work of redemption, calls for a general chorus of praiſe from the creation of God. "Sing, O heavens, for the Lord hath done it; ſhout ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into ſinging, ye mountains, O foreſt, and every tree therein, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob."

What if we underſtand this apoſtrophe to earth and ſkies, as an intimation, that they owe all their beauty and glory, all their benignity and uſefulneſs to the work of redemption?

When man ſinned, he fell under a curſe, and the earth was curſed for his ſake. It is the redemption, which has in any degree removed the curſe. Had not the Redeemer interpoſed, the earth would have been deſolate and barren, and the heavens would have withheld their friendly influence; either the human ſucceſſion would have ceaſed from the earth, or have been continu-

ed in it under an unqualified curſe ; and the world would have been a comfortleſs and inhoſpitable waſte. The inchanting ſcenes and charming proſpects of the ſummer ſeaſon ; the ſmiling aſpect and enlivening influence of the ſkies ; the winds which temper our atmoſphere, the clouds which waft the ſhowers, and the rains which refreſh the earth ; the ſpreading lawns, the verdant meads and the joyous herds ; the ſtately mountains and the cheerful vales ; the fruitful trees, and the golden harveſts ; all the riches and beauties of nature —all that is the reverſe of the dreary ſtate of winter, owe their exiſtence to this marvellous work. To this we are indebted for the joys of ſenſe, and the pleaſures of imagination ; for the continuance of our race, or its continuance in ſo agreeable a condition ; for the happineſs of children in the parent, and the hopes of the parent in the children ; for the ſweets of relative connexions, the delights of friendly intercourſe, and all the bleſſings of ſociety. Sing then, ye heavens ; ſun, moon and ſtars ; ſhout ye valleys of the earth ; break forth into ſinging, ye mountains, foreſts and trees, ye meadows, fields and groves ; join in the ſong, ye ſons of Adam ; for the Lord hath done great things for you : he hath redeemed a ruined world from the curſe ; an apoſtate race from deſtruction. Amidſt this chorus of praiſe for redemption, are any found, who would baniſh from ſociety the Redeemer's religion, as if it were a nuiſance ; not a bleſſing ? Be aſtoniſhed, O ye heavens at this : O earth, be thou horribly afraid.

This apoſtrophe to heaven and earth ſtrongly expreſſes the vaſt importance of redemption. So great and glorious is the work, that if men ſhould cenſure it, or ſhould even be ſilent, inanimate na-

ture would riſe with aſtoniſhment to ſhout in their ſtead the high praiſes of God.

Let ſinners, conſcious of guilt, rejoice and give thanks for the glorious hopes, which are ſet before them in the goſpel.

Reaſon teaches you, that there is a God, a juſt and holy Being, to whom you owe obedience, and on whom you depend for happineſs—that, having ſinned againſt this God, you deſerve his wrath, and that it would be a righteous thing to recompenſe tribulation to you. Thus far reaſon leads you; and here it deſerts you. It plunges you into darkneſs; but affords no light to cheer you there, and lends no hand to extricate you thence. The goſpel teaches you, that a Saviour has died, and that there is redemption through his blood. "It is a faithful ſaying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners." Whatever anxiety you may feel under a deep conviction of your guilt, you will find conſolation in reſorting to this doctrine. When Peter proclaimed to the awakened Jews the promiſe of remiſſion on repentance, they gladly received the word. When Philip preached, in Samaria, ſalvation by Chriſt, there was great joy in that city. When Paul taught the gentiles in Antioch, that Chriſt was given for ſalvation to the ends of the earth, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord.

True *believers* have *ſpecial* reaſon to rejoice in the redemption, for they are already partakers of it: it is actually made over to them. When, in a conſciouſneſs of their compliance with the terms of ſalvation, they can appropriate their perſonal intereſt in it, with what gratitude and joy may they contemplate the happy change in their condition? They have paſſed from bondage to free-

dom—from guilt to pardon—from death to life. Once they were dead in ſin; under condemnation; expoſed to the wrath of God; inſenſible of danger; going on in their treſpaſſes; accumulating guilt; and liable every moment to be loſt in hopeleſs miſery. Now their ſins are pardoned and their ſouls renewed; they are under the care of God's grace, and the ſecurity of his promiſe; they have a title to heaven; and the divine Spirit, dwelling in them, will preſerve them unto ſalvation. Happy change: they may review, with admiration, the grace of God, which has redeemed them from ſin, and prepared them unto glory. They may adopt the language of Paul; "I thank Chriſt Jeſus my Lord, that I have obtained mercy—The grace of my Lord is exceedingly abundant."

The *angels* above join in the general ſong of praiſe for the redemption. "The heavens ſing, for the Lord hath done it." When the Saviour was born, a multitude of the heavenly hoſt praiſed God, and ſaid, "Glory to God in the higheſt; peace on earth; good will to men." There is *new* joy in their preſence, when a ſinner repents. Every converſion among guilty men; every acceſſion to the church of Chriſt becomes the theme of a new ſong among thoſe benevolent beings. When there is a general revival of pure religion, a large extenſion and increaſe of Chriſt's church, they ſhout forth their joy in loftier and louder ſtrains: then the whole hierarchy join in the praiſe: "All the angels fall before God's throne on their faces, and worſhip him, ſaying, Amen. Bleſſing, and glory, and wiſdom, and thankſgiving, and honour, and power and might, be unto our God forever and ever."

Angels rejoice in the redemption as a bleſſing

to *mankind.* Their benevolence intereſts them in the happineſs of our race. They rejoice, when they ſee ſinners redeemed from guilt, and brought to participate with them in the felicity of the world above.

They rejoice in the benefits which reſult to *themſelves* from the redemption. Though, having never fallen, they are not *ſubjects* of this redemption, yet they derive unſpeakable advantages from it. Their knowledge of God's character and works, their admiration of his wiſdom and grace, their love to him, and benevolence to his creatures, and conſequently their real happineſs, are increaſed by this diſpenſation. Hence the apoſtle ſays, "He was ſent to preach the unſearchable riches of Chriſt, not only that men might ſee what is the fellowſhip of the myſtery, which had been hidden in the purpoſe of God; but alſo to the intent, that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wiſdom of God, according to his eternal purpoſe in Chriſt Jeſus." Hence they join with the ſaints above in this new ſong unto Chriſt, "Thou art worthy to receive honour and power, for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed *us* to God by thy blood, and haſt made *us* kings and prieſts unto him."

To the words of our text John alludes, when ſpeaking of the redemption, he ſays, "Every creature in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth heard I ſaying, Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that ſitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever."

How glorious is this redemption, which awakens the praiſes of all holy intelligences? Great muſt be the work, which thus intereſts the benevolence, excites the joy, and tunes the ſongs

of angels, as well as ſaints. The joy, which it inſpires in heaven, demonſtrates, how important it is to our fallen race. Let guilty mortals repair to the mercy of that God, who hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himſelf in Iſrael.

How awful is the demerit of ſin, which could not be expiated without ſo coſtly a ſacrifice? How awfully is this demerit augmented in thoſe, who reject the benefit of ſuch a ſacrifice? If diſobedience to God's law could not be pardoned without the atonement of Chriſt's blood; what atonement will be found for thoſe who trample this blood under foot? Their ſin will remain; it will cleave more cloſely to their ſouls; for them there is no more ſacrifice; wrath will come on them to the uttermoſt.

How happy is the ſecurity of true believers? "They are made accepted in the beloved." They are redeemed, not with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Chriſt. Their redemption is ſure. A competent price has been paid. Through grace they have complied with the terms of their acceptance. Nothing ſhall ſeparate them from the love of God in Chriſt. Rejoice in that which God has done for your ſouls, and is doing in them—done to procure ſalvation for you, and to prepare you for ſalvation, and is doing to preſerve you to it, and to qualify you more and more for it. Rejoice in all opportunities to celebrate his works of grace.

Come, my brethren, to this table of the Lord, with a thankful recollection of the mercies diſplayed in your redemption; and here learn the ſongs, cultivate the tempers, and ſeek the bleſſings of thoſe who are redeemed from the earth. Sing, for the Lord hath done it. Break forth into ſinging—ſhout, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himſelf in Iſrael.

SERMON XVIII.

The Wheels of Providence.

A Faſt Sermon, April 1806.

EZEKIEL i. 16.

—— Their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

THE prophet Ezekiel was carried to Babylon among ſome of the firſt of the captive Jews. Before his captivity he ſaw many changes; and afterward by a ſpirit of prophecy he foreſaw many more, which are recorded in this book.

The great events in providence, which awaited his own, and ſome other countries, are repreſented to him in an emblematic viſion. He ſaw "a whirlwind riſing out of the north," or out of *Babylon*, which lay northward of Judea. This betokened new calamities coming on his country from that quarter. "There was a great cloud and fire infolding itſelf;" or rolling in wreaths of ſmoke, as when clouds are blown by a whirlwind. This denoted the terrible majeſty and irreſiſtible power of God's judgments executed on a guilty land. From the midſt of the fiery cloud

" he saw four living creatures come forth," representing the angels of God, who were the ministers of his providence and the executioners of his wrath on guilty nations. These living creatures, in all their movements, were under the direction of one governing Spirit. All the angels are " ministers of God, hearkening to his voice, obeying his commands, and doing his pleasure." They " had each four wings," with two of which they covered their bodies in token of their profound reverence, and with two they flew to perform the divine behests. " Their wings were stretched out, and the wings of one touched those of another," to signify that they moved in concert. " Whither the Spirit was to go they went, and they turned not, when they went ;" but proceeded with steadiness in their work, till it was accomplished. To express the alacrity and rapidity of their motions, the prophet says, " Their appearance was as a flash of lightening."

In describing the scenery of the vision, Ezekiel further adds, that " by each of the living creatures there was a *wheel.*" As there were four living creatures, so there were four wheels. " And their appearance and their work were as the colour of Beryl, and they four had one likeness, and there was, as it were, *a wheel in the middle of a wheel.*" This description is designed to represent the mysterious, but regular manner, in which God guides and orders events in relation to the nations of the earth.

To illustrate and improve this figurative representation of God's providence, is what we now design.

I. The providence of God is represented by a *wheel*, to signify, that it is always *in motion*—always operating, to effectuate its various designs.

The Being, who made the world at firſt, "works hitherto," and will continue forever to work. He upholds and governs the world, and ſuperintends all events, great and ſmall, which take place in it. If he ſhould ſuſpend his influence and withdraw his hand, the ſyſtem of nature would be diſſolved, the ſtars would ſtart from their orbs, planets run lawleſs through the void, and creation return to chaos.

The ſame providence which ſuſtains the univerſe, overrules all events in our world. Not only the armies of heaven, but alſo the inhabitants of the earth, are ſubject to its power. The revolutions of ſtates and kingdoms are under its controul. "There are many devices in the hearts of men; but the counſel of the Lord ſhall ſtand." They have neither wiſdom to guide, nor power to effect their purpoſes without his ſupport and permiſſion. He raiſes up one, and caſts down another; whatſoever he pleaſes, that he does, and none can ſtay his hand. He weakens the ſtrength of the mighty, and turns to fooliſhneſs the devices of the crafty. He gives power to the faint, and to them who have no might he increaſes ſtrength. The great events, which are often brought about by diſproportionate means, are proofs of an almighty, ſuperintending providence.

The prophet, deſcribing the *wheel* of providence, ſays, "It was on the earth, and its rings were ſo high, that it was dreadful." All things were comprehended within its vaſt circumference, and moved with its motions. There is a ſimilar repreſentation in the book of Job. "Who can by ſearching find out God? Who can find out the almighty to *perfection?* It is high as heaven; what can we do? Deeper than hell; what can we know? The meaſure thereof is longer than the earth, and

broader than the ſea." The majeſty of providence is deſcribed in the like elevated language by the prophet Iſaiah. "God ſits on the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as graſſhoppers. He weigheth the mountains in ſcales, and the hills in a balance. All nations before him are as a drop in a bucket, or a ſmall duſt in a balance. As the heavens are higher than the earth, ſo are his thoughts, and his ways above ours."

II. Providence is compared to a wheel, to ſignify the *mutability* of all things on earth.

As the condition of particular perſons, ſo the ſtate of nations and kingdoms is always changing. They are all on this mighty, ſtupendous wheel. All are in motion. None are ſtationary. Some are riſing; others falling. They who riſe, exult in their aſcending progreſs, and forget that their motion will ſoon be reverſed, and that the nations, which now ſeem to lie under them in the duſt, will, at a future time, change places with them.

There was a time, when the Jews were high above all nations. In Ezekiel's day they had ſunk to the loweſt degradation. They were at the bottom of the wheel. They had loſt their power, their government, their liberty. Many were carried captive to a diſtant land; thoſe who remained at home, were ſlaves there. But they were to riſe again, and their enemies were to fall. The Aſſyrians, now their maſters, were afterward conquered by the Perſians. At that time the Jews were releaſed from bondage, and allowed to return to their own country. The Perſians ſoon ſunk from their elevated poſition on the wheel and the Grecians roſe over them. Theſe, in their turn, rolled down, and the Romans aſcended. Thus

the nations of the earth have been, ſtill are, and, for a time, will be in continual rotation.

Theſe changes are the immediate effects of the pride, ambition and avarice of men; but they are all under the ſuperintendency of a wiſe and righteous providence. "The rings of its wheels are full of eyes." Their motions are not caſual, but intelligent; the effects, not of blind impulſe, but of rational deſign. "The Spirit of life is in the wheels, and whitherſoever the Spirt goes, they go."

God has ſome great and benevolent deſign in all his works. Men have deſigns too, but they are often very different from his. The end, which divine wiſdom has in view, is the protection and enlargement of the church, the diffuſion of knowledge, and the eventual eſtabliſhment of virtue and righteouſneſs. The objects, which earthly powers are purſuing, are the enlargement of territory, the extenſion of dominion, the accumulation of wealth. But all their purpoſes God overrules to the furtherance of his own holy and benevolent ends. "The wrath of men he makes to praiſe him, and the remainder of their wrath he reſtrains." Powerful kings are often "the rods of his anger to chaſtiſe the people of his wrath; howbeit they mean not ſo, neither doth their heart think ſo, but it is in their heart to deſtroy and cut off nations not a few." And when they have accompliſhed God's righteous deſign in the puniſhment of guilty nations, then "he will puniſh the fruit of their ſtout heart, and the glory of their high looks."

III. The text ſuggeſts to us, that there is a wonderful *order* and *connexion* in the works of providence.

The wheels in Ezekiel's viſion were ſo nicely framed and adjuſted, that they moved in concert,

and without interference. "There was a wheel in the middle of a wheel." Their motions were all harmonious; they were all directed to the same point, and guided in the same course by the Spirit, which was in them.

In a complex machine, there is a number of wheels, all which have a relation to, and dependence upon one another. One wheel, put in motion, moves the next, and this another through the whole system, till the main figure is exhibited, and the final object is accomplished. The scheme of providence is more complex, than any human design. It is carried on by a greater number of movements. It is framed together by more exquisite wisdom. It is conducted with more exact regularity, and accomplishes its end with more infallible certainty.

We can see a part only of God's immense plan. We cannot discern his work from the beginning to the end. But we can see enough to convince us, that there is a wheel within a wheel, and that one movement is produced by another. There is often in the scheme of providence, an obvious connexion, which we can trace through a long series.

The act of Jacob's sons in selling their brother Joseph into Egypt, led, by various steps, to the preservation of that country, and of the patriarchal family in a time of extreme famine. It brought down this family into Egypt. The increase of the Hebrews awakened the jealousy of the Egyptians who, to check the growth of these foreigners, reduced them to cruel servitude. The oppressions which they suffered were the occasion of their seeking and obtaining deliverance from this land of idolatry. In consequence of their deliverance, a church was planted in Canaan,

which had been long overſpread with ignorance, ſuperſtition and vice. From hence the knowledge of true religion was afterward communicated to other nations. The Jews often departed from the purity of divine inſtitutions, and corrupted the religion, which had been taught them from heaven. For their defection they were puniſhed with various calamities. For their impenitence under milder puniſhments they were given up to the power of their enemies, and ſcattered among ſurrounding nations. By means of their captivities and diſperſions the knowledge of the ſacred ſcriptures and of the ancient prophecies was diffuſed in the world; notices of the future appearance of a wonderful Redeemer were conveyed to many nations; the Old Teſtament became ſo far known and regarded among the learned, that it was tranſlated into the Greek, which was the moſt common language of the day. Thus the world was, in ſome meaſure, prepared to receive the goſpel, when it was preached by the apoſtles.

When the Saviour appeared, the Jews rejected him. For their unbelief they were delivered into the hands of the Romans, and ſcattered into all parts of the empire. Their diſperſion was the occaſion of many viſits and epiſtles from the apoſtles to them, and to the gentiles among whom they dwelt. Thus the goſpel was more ſpeedily and more extenſively propagated. Things are now working, in the courſe of providence, for the recovery of that people, who have long ſeemed to be reprobated for their unbelief. "Have they ſtumbled, that they ſhould fall? By no means; but rather through their fall is ſalvation come to the gentiles. And if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminiſhing of them be the riches of the gentiles, how much more their ful-

neſs? And what ſhall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"

Within our own times we have ſeen ſomething of this connexion in the wheels of providence. The late revolution in America awakened a revolutionary ſpirit in France. The ſucceſſive changes in that nation have placed at the head of government a man of deep policy, boundleſs ambition, daring enterprize, and diſtinguiſhed military talents, who has effected aſtoniſhing changes in Europe. The mighty convulſions, which have there been felt, are eaſily retraced to our own country. Here was a wheel in the midſt of a wheel. When this was moved, others moved after it in ſucceſſion, till a great part of the world was ſeen in motion. Great events have already appeared; greater are ſtill to follow.

However unhappy the wars and changes in Europe may have been in their immediate effects, ſome conſequences have followed, which good men deſired. The credit and influence of popery in France, Italy, and other ſtates, are much diminiſhed. It does not indeed appear, that the nations are reformed; but the way is more open than formerly, to apply the means of reformation. The proteſtant religion is now allowed, where once it was puniſhable by law; and the preachers of pure Chriſtianity are tolerated and encouraged, where, not long ſince, they would have ſuffered perſecution. Infidelity has indeed riſen on the declenſions of popery, as prophecy has warned us to expect; but its triumph cannot be long, becauſe it is, in its nature, inconſiſtent with the freedom, if not with the ſubſiſtence of civil ſociety.

In a conſiderable part of Germany the eſtabliſhed religion is popery, and in that empire there will undoubtedly be great changes. The emperor

of the Gauls may probably be an inſtrument, in the hand of providence, to weaken the political power of the papal religion in other nations, as he has done in France; and when this inſtrument ſhall have accompliſhed its end, it will be laid aſide.

IV. The text farther teaches us, that the ways of providence are often *ſecret* and *myſterious*. One wheel is hidden within another. We cannot diſcern in what manner, and to what end, they are moved, until their motions are manifeſted in the events produced.

"Clouds and darkneſs are round about God's throne. His judgments are unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out. His way is in the ſea, his path in the great waters, and his footſteps are not known." When he works, there is "a hiding of his power."

God himſelf is inviſible. We ſee the operations, but not the hand, that performs and directs them. As Job ſays, "We go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but we cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he doth work, but we cannot behold him; he hideth himſelf on the right hand, that we cannot ſee him."

The events, which we obſerve, often have an undiſcerned connexion with other events, which we never expected nor imagined. Great calamities, and great deliverances, important changes and mighty revolutions are frequently the effects of cauſes, which ſeemed indifferent, or tending to quite contrary reſults. Men are ſometimes raiſed from obſcurity and brought into publick life, to accompliſh works, which we ſhould not ſuppoſe they could ever have intended, or even imagined, and to which their wiſdom, ability and education appeared utterly unequal. The

faireſt means, by ſome unforeſeen occurrence, fail of their end; and meaſures the moſt unpromiſing, by ſome ſecret influence, or by ſome ſtrange coincidence of circumſtances, prove wonderfully ſucceſsful. Many of the great events, which take place in the political world, are brought about in an aſtoniſhing manner, which mortals could not have contrived beforehand, nor can inveſtigate afterward. Hence Solomon ſays, "The race is not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong, nor bread to the wiſe, nor riches to men of underſtanding; nor favour to men of ſkill; but time and chance happeneth to them all." Little incidents may lead to mighty conſequences. Diſappointments may be the occaſion of great ſucceſſes. A defeat in battle may operate to a future victory, or victory to a total defeat. The cautious counſels of wiſe politicians may terminate in perplexity and confuſion; the raſh adventures of the bold and daring may, in the moſt complicated dangers, effect ſurprizing deliverances. The prophet, truſting in God's promiſed protection, bids defiance to the powers of the world. "Aſſociate yourſelves, O ye people, and ye ſhall be broken in pieces; give ear, all ye of far countries; gird yourſelves, and ye ſhall be broken in pieces; take counſel together, and it ſhall come to nought; ſpeak the word, and it ſhall not ſtand; for God is with us."

Our ſubject ſuggeſts to us ſome uſeful reflections.

1. It is matter of high conſolation, that all things are under the government and ſuperintendency of a perfect Being. "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice."

There are many events, which give us anxiety. As we cannot foreſee their conſequences, we fear

the worſt. But the very events, which ſeem to bode evil, may, in the unſeen connexion of things, tend to good. If, in their firſt operation, they ſhould ſeem diſaſtrous, they may, in a ſeries of motions, exhibit occaſions of joy.

In ſome powerful nations we ſee great avarice, ambition and pride. Theſe paſſions virtue will condemn, and againſt them prudence will guard. But the things, which unrighteous men intend for evil, may, in the wonderful workings of providence, be turned to good.

Many inſtances of ſuch an overruling providence are recorded in ſcripture, and ſome we ourſelves have ſeen. The claims, which the Britiſh government made upon us, filled us with concern; their attempts to enforce their claims rouſed us to arms. The reſult has been the eſtabliſhment of our national independence, and a ſeaſon of unparalleled proſperity. Our independence was one movement in the grand ſcheme of providence. This movement has touched other wheels, and has brought forward other movements; and theſe, whatever their preſent appearance may be, will ſooner or later reſult in happy and glorious events. Ezekiel's wheels, in their various turnings, rolled back the Jews from the land of their captivity to their own country. The ſame wheels are ſtill rolling under the direction of the ſame eyes, which guided them in the prophet's viſion, and will by and by preſent to the world grand and important events, in which all wiſe and good men will rejoice.

We often complain of the meaſures of human governments, as unwiſe or unrighteous. Such they may be, for earthly rulers are but men; and even we ourſelves, wiſe as we ſeem, may miſjudge, for we alſo are men. But there is one great-

er than all. He rules univerſally. Juſtice and judgment ſurround his throne. To his laws let us ſubmit; in his government let us rejoice.

2. Our ſubject urges us to approve ourſelves to God by a wiſe and virtuous conduct, that we may be ſafe under his government.

Though we cannot very accurately judge what will be the conſequence of the political meaſures purſued by our own, or other governments, yet we can judge infallibly concerning the tendency and effect of general virtue, and of prevailing wickedneſs, under the divine government; for "righteouſneſs exalteth a nation; but ſin is a reproach to any people."

We all wiſh the happineſs of our country.—However incompetent we may be to preſcribe the political means of national felicity, we are all competent to judge of the moral means, for theſe are made manifeſt in the courſe of God's providence, and in the inſtructions of his word.

Let each one, then, ſearch his own heart, review his paſt life, renounce his iniquities, do juſtly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Let every one receive and revere the holy ſcriptures, as the oracles of God, and place them before him for the direction of his life, and hide them in his heart, that by their influence he may be reſtrained from ſin, and quickened to every good work.

Let all, in their reſpective places, encourage and promote virtue and righteouſneſs among others, and conſider one another to provoke unto love and good works.

Let all cheerfully contribute to the ſupport of divine inſtitutions in the ſociety of which they are members, and to the diffuſion of Chriſtian knowledge among them who ſit in darkneſs.

Let the ſabbath be honoured by a pious receſs from the labours of the world, and by a devout attendance on the worſhip of God, which is to be ſtatedly ſolemnized on that day.

Let children be early formed to ſentiments of piety and to the practice of virtue, that they may be uſeful members of ſociety on earth, and become meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light.

Cordially uniting in ſuch meaſures as theſe, we ſhall enjoy the ſure protection of an almighty providence, and have little to fear from hoſtile nations. "When our ways pleaſe the Lord, he will make our enemies to be at peace with us."

3. Our ſubject warns us againſt a thoughtleſs confidence of continued proſperity.

The prophet compares the work of providence to a moving wheel, to ſignify, that the world is in continual change—that no condition of perſons or nations is ſtable and permanent.

While Europe has been in agitations and convulſions, we have, for more than twenty years, enjoyed great proſperity and uninterrupted peace. There have been ſome moleſtations from the ſavages, and ſome ſpoliations on our commerce; but no invaſion; no ſuch hoſtile attack, as has required a national exertion for defence. While ſome of the governments of Europe have been ſubverted, and others convulſed, ours has remained, and ſtill remains unaſſailed. While many parts of the ancient continent have felt the dire ſcourge of ſcarcity, and even famine, the conſequence of waſting war and inclement ſeaſons, we have enjoyed ſuch a redundance of the fruits of the earth, as to be able, on advantageous terms, to ſupply the wants of our ſuffering fellow mortals.

But ſhall we promiſe ourſelves the long, uninterrupted continuance of ſuch proſperity? No:

The wheel is rolling; and ſoon it may be our turn to feel its deſcending motion. The changes in other nations are warnings to us. There are circumſtances attending our preſent ſituation, which carry a threatening aſpect. It is a period, in which, according to the general interpretations of prophecy, great events are to be expected. Our proſperity has continued much longer, than we, or almoſt any nation have experienced at one period. Our moral ſtate does not appear to be mended; but iniquities of ſome kinds have obſervably increaſed. If an accumulated weight of national guilt ſhall fall on the deſcending part of the wheel of providence, this will awfully accelerate its downward motion. Let us not be highminded but fear. God ſeems to be coming forth out of his place to puniſh the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquities. The earth diſcloſes her blood, and ſcarcely covers her ſlain. Let us enter into our chambers, and ſhut our doors about us; there let us hide ourſelves until the indignation be overpaſt.

The chambers to which we muſt reſort, for ſecurity from impending ſtorms, are the promiſes and providence of God. "The name of the Lord is a ſtrong tower; the righteous run into it, and are ſafe." Into this we muſt enter by repentance and prayer, and here we muſt continue by humble obedience.

The ſcripture foretels a time, when the religion of the goſpel ſhall generally prevail, and by its benign influence ſpread peace and happineſs among the human race. But previous to this glorious period, there will be terrible judgments, violent convulſions, and mighty revolutions. Theſe will be the dire effects of men's inveterate corruptions, which will have ſunk ſo deep, that they can be

purged away only by the ſpirit of judgment and the ſpirit of burning. To ſecure ourſelves from a ſhare in theſe calamities all human power and policy are utterly inſufficient. Our ſecurity will depend on the governing influence of religious principles, and the general practice of virtue and righteouſneſs. If we would eſcape the plagues, which are coming on other nations, we muſt ſo far ſeparate ourſelves from them, as not to partake of their ſins.

The judgments foretold in prophecy, as nearly preceding the grand reformation in religion, ſeem chiefly to be pointed againſt the nations embracing the papal ſuperſtition. But if we, who profeſs a purer religion, imitate thoſe nations in vice and immorality, on what ground ſhall we expect an exemption from their calamities? National ſafety depends on virtuous manners, not on nominal profeſſions. Chriſt ſays to the church in Sardis, "I know thy works, that thou haſt a name that thou liveſt, and art dead. Be watchful therefore and ſtrengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember how thou haſt received and heard, and hold faſt and repent. If thou ſhalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou ſhalt not know, what hour I will come upon thee. He that overcometh ſhall be cloathed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life; but I will confeſs his name before my Father, and before his angels."

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the churches.

SERMON XIX.

The Temper of a Chriſtian with regard to Moral Good and Evil.

ROMANS xii. 9.

Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

THE difference between good and evil is here ſuppoſed to be already underſtood and acknowledged. Theſe Romans, even in their gentile ſtate, had known God, though they had not glorified him; and they had received the inſcription of the great rules of morality on their hearts, though they had not obeyed them. By the goſpel there had been made to them a more full diſcovery of the divine law and of moral obligation; and, at the ſame time, a way had been opened for the pardon of their paſt tranſgreſſions. They muſt therefore now have been capable of judging what was right.

The wickedneſs of the world, beſure of the Chriſtian part of it, is owing far more to the want of an honeſt diſpoſition, than to the want of neceſſary information. Though various ſpeculative opinions are adopted among Chriſtians, yet con-

cerning right and wrong in practice there is a general agreement, except where the judgment is perverted by the habits of vice. The main point is to abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good. With this temper governing our hearts, we ſhall be ſecured from dangerous errors; or at leaſt from their dangerous influence.

We will conſider the two branches of our text diſtinctly.

Firſt. We will explain and illuſtrate the *abhorrence* of *evil.*

On a careleſs, ſuperficial view of themſelves, ſome may imagine, they abhor evil, when they really cleave to it. To prevent miſapprehenſions, we muſt examine our hearts with attention.

1. There is a great difference between a *real abhorrence* of evil, and an *external forbearance* of it.

Men do not always purſue the courſe of life, which, under other circumſtances, their hearts would really chooſe. A regard to worldly intereſt, the want of means or opportunity, the apprehenſion of detection and diſgrace, the power of education and example, may be a temporary reſtraint from the iniquity to which they are ſtrongly inclined, and which, as ſoon as the reſtraint ceaſes, they will purſue with avidity. King Joaſh did right, while he was under the influence of Jehoiada the prieſt; but when the good prieſt was dead, the king fell away to idolatry; and even murdered Jehoiada's ſon, who had the boldneſs to reprove his apoſtacy. He who loves iniquity is, in the judgment of God, deemed guilty of it, though he ſhould not *actually* practice it; for, in this caſe, the practice is prevented, not by voluntary choice, but by external reſtraint.

The divine law forbids covetouſneſs, as well as

oppreſſion ; luſt, as well as adultery ; envy and malice, as well as cruelty and revenge. It requires us to put off the old man, not only with his deeds, but with his luſts too. The thought of fooliſhneſs it pronounces to be ſin. Wrath and hatred indulged, it condemns as murder conceived in the heart. The outward conduct forms the character in the ſight of men ; but in the ſight of God the character is determined by the habitual temper : for he ſeeth not as man ſeeth.

To know ourſelves then, we muſt obſerve the current of our thoughts, the tendency of our deſires, and the general run of our wiſhes and intentions.

We forbear ſome iniquities, which we ſee in others. So far it is well. But what reſtrains us ? —Is it a ſettled principle of oppoſition to evil ? Is it a ſenſe of God's holy preſence and a regard to the glory of his name ? Is it a fear of his diſpleaſure and an apprehenſion of the judgment to come ? Or is it only ſome inferior motive ariſing from conſiderations of temporal convenience ? The man, who avoids evil from the latter motive, may be called *prudent*. It is only the influence of the former, which denominates him *virtuous*.

2. There is a great difference between an *habitual*, and an *occaſional* abhorrence of evil.

One who, in the general courſe of his life, is devoted to a particular vice, may, at times, feel an abhorrence of it. Exceſs of indulgence will often produce a temporary diſguſt, without eradicating the habit. Nature, clogged and enfeebled by a debauch, loathes the pleaſures with which it is overloaded ; but as ſoon as it riſes from the depreſſion, the deſire of gratification returns with its former violence. Sickneſs or affliction may, for the preſent, deaden the reliſh for particular

ſins, or awaken ſuch conviction and remorſe, as will produce a temporary abhorrence of them; and yet, when health and proſperity are reſtored, the love of theſe very ſins operates as uſual. There is no alteration in the temper of the mind; the only difference is in the ſtate of the body, or in the outward condition.

There are few wicked men, but who have their ſerious and thoughtful frames. The admonition of a friend, or their own reflections may awaken ſentiments of oppoſition to vice, and reſolutions to forſake it; and yet theſe ſentiments and reſolutions may never be carried into effect.

This occaſional indifference, or diſreliſh to evil, is not a real abhorrence of it. The mind ſtill is bent toward it: there is only an accidental ſuſpenſion of the habitual deſire.

3. There is a material difference between our abhorrence of evil in *other people*, and our abhorrence of it in *ourſelves*.

The man addicted to vice condemns in others every vice, but his own; and *this* too, when he happens to ſuffer by it in his intereſt or reputation.

There are thoſe, who take great freedom with the characters of their neighbours, and ſeem to think it perfectly innocent for them to divert themſelves at the expenſe of any man's peace and honour. But none are more ſevere to condemn this liberty, when they are the objects of the ſlander. The moſt diſhoneſt man, that you meet with, if he happen to be cheated in a bargain, or injured in his property, will expreſs great abhorrence of fraud and oppreſſion. And even in indifferent caſes, men uſually cenſure in others the vices, of which they think themſelves to be clear. The knave abhors the drunkard, the prodigal deſ-

piſes the miſer, and the profane ſcoffer deteſts the diſſembler in religion.

A forwardneſs then to condemn ſin in others, is no proof of a real abhorrence of it; for this may proceed from partiality, ſelfiſhneſs, pride, ill nature, or a diſpoſition to juſtify ourſelves. The main queſtion is, In what light we view *our own* ſins? *Theſe* we may moſt clearly diſcern; and from *theſe* we have moſt to fear. *Theſe* we ſhould contemplate with peculiar abhorrence, and condemn with greateſt ſeverity. David ſays, "I was upright before God, and I kept myſelf from *mine* iniquity.

4. There is an eſſential difference between the abhorrence of evil *itſelf*, and the abhorrence of its *conſequences*.

All ſin, by the divine conſtitution, tends to miſery. Even in the preſent life, we ſee this to be, in ſome degree, its uſual effect.

Nature perverted loves ſin; but nature cannot be ſo changed as to love miſery. The ſin may be pleaſing, but the proper fruits of it never can be ſo.

The wicked man, while he loves his vices, abhors their tendency. When he has deſtroyed his health by exceſs, and his ſubſtance by prodigality, he may wiſh he had been more temperate and frugal. He may lament the painful conſequences of his irregularity. But he would have felt the ſame uneaſineſs and diſquietude, if he had loſt his ſubſtance by fire, or his health by a fever. He is not diſpleaſed with his own conduct, but with the divine government, which has eſtabliſhed a connexion between vice and miſery. "The fooliſhneſs of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth againſt the Lord." If he reſolves to refrain from his former vices; ſtill it is his wiſh,

that he might indulge them with ſafety, and that the conſequences of them might be prevented by ſome more eaſy and agreeable means, than forſaking them.

To judge, then, whether we abhor evil, we muſt enquire, whether it is ſin itſelf, or only the conſequence of it, that offends us—whether we are grieved for our ſins in the inſtances, in which we feel no preſent inconveniences from them; for our *ſecret* ſins; for *every* known act of wickedneſs; for the guilty *thoughts* and *inclinations*, which have never riſen into external acts—what is the principle within us which is croſſed; whether it is the love of virtue and righteouſneſs, or only our pride and covetouſneſs. By ſuch enquiries we are to learn, whether we abhor moral evil, or only abhor poverty, infamy and pain.

5. We muſt remember, that there is a mighty difference between an abhorrence of *evil*, and an abhorrence of the *perſons*, who have done it.

This diſtinction is not ſufficiently regarded. If from any cauſe you have conceived a prejudice againſt a man, you readily condemn in him every action in the leaſt degree exceptionable; not always becauſe you hate the action, but often merely becauſe you hate the man. The ſame things, which in others would paſs unnoticed, are reprobated in him, becauſe you wiſh to deſtroy his reputation, and ſink him as low in the opinion of the world, as he has already fallen in yours. This is ſo far from being a hatred of evil, that it is really a rejoicing in it. It is nothing different from malice. The ſame temper, which prompts you to ſcandalize an enemy, and to ſay all manner of evil againſt him, would take pleaſure in his real iniquities, becauſe theſe might enable you to attack his reputation with better hopes of ſucceſs. Let

nó man then conclude that he abhors evil, unleſs this abhorrence extends farther than to the evil which he ſees in his enemies. It muſt come home to himſelf, and operate with peculiar warmth againſt his own iniquities.

Nothing is more common, than for oppoſite parties in religion, or in politicks, to vilify one another. The ſame conduct, which a zealot would overlook, or even vindicate in his own party, or ſect, he will, with great ſeverity, reprehend, and on all occaſions, expoſe in a rival one. *This* he wiſhes to weaken and diſcredit; but to exalt and eſtabliſh his own. For this reaſon you often ſee religious partiſans far more zealous to make proſelytes to their ſect, than to make ſaints of their proſelytes. It was ſaid of the Phariſees, "They compaſſed ſea and land to make one proſelyte, and when they had gained him, they rendered him two fold more a child of hell than themſelves." Hence it is, that they who pretend to form a pure church, conſiſting wholly of ſaints, uſually bring ſaintſhip down to ſo low a ſtandard that few will want proof. They have men's perſons in admiration, not becauſe of their virtue, but for the ſake of advantage: and the only indiſpenſible qualification is a zealous attachment to *their* party.

When we feel in ourſelves a zeal againſt iniquity, let us ſtand and enquire, whoſe iniquity it is, that warms our zeal. Is it our own, or ſome other man's? Is it that of a friend, or of an enemy? That of the ſect to which we belong, or only that of a ſect which we hate and wiſh to depreſs? If only the latter awakens our diſpleaſure, it is not the *evil* of the perſon, but the *perſon himſelf*, that is the object of our abhorrence. And let us beware, leſt the zeal in which we glory as a virtue, be finally imputed as a vice. If we have

bitter envy and ſtrife in our hearts, this wiſdom deſcendeth not from above.

6. We muſt diſtinguiſh between an abhorrence of *particular* evils, and an abhorrence of evil *at large*.

There may be ſome vices, from which men are ſecured by their conſtitution of body, or condition in life. There are alſo vices, which, in ſome men's character, are excluded by oppoſite vices. A *profuſe*, and a *miſerly* diſpoſition are both vicious; but they cannot meet in the ſame perſon, becauſe they are, in their nature, inconſiſtent. The ſame may be ſaid of *indolence* and *paſſionateneſs*—of *careleſſneſs* and *anxiety*; and many other vicious tempers, in their extreme. If you hate a particular vice only becauſe it ſtands in the way of your purſuing another; and if you abſtain from one evil, that you may practice a different one with greater freedom; you are no better than your neighbor, who abſtains from your vices, that he may follow his own. Your ſuppoſed abhorrence of evil, is only a love of evil. You reject one, becauſe you love another more.

The queſtion then muſt be, whether you eſteem God's commands concerning *all* things to be right, and hate *every* falſe way.

Theſe obſervations may ſufficiently illuſtrate the temper under conſideration. Before we diſmiſs this branch of our ſubject, it will be proper to call up in our minds ſome arguments adapted to awaken an abhorrence of evil.

1. All moral evil is contrary to the nature of God.

That great and dreadful Being, who fills the univerſe with his preſence, and comprehends all creation within the circuit of his inſpection, is ever repreſented, in ſcripture, as loving rigteouſ-

neſs and hating wickedneſs; as looking on the virtuous with approbation and favor, and beholding with abhorrence the workers of iniquity. Reaſon conſents to the truth of this repreſentation; for a being of perfect knowledge and rectitude can never confound things ſo oppoſite in their nature, as virtue and vice.

The dignity of man conſiſts in a conformity to the character, and the happineſs of man depends on the enjoyment of the favour of this all-perfect, Almighty Being. He who loves what God hates, and he who abhors what God approves, is the object of his diſpleaſure, and therefore muſt be miſerable.

Do we believe, that there is ſuch a Being? And can we think it indifferent what choice we make, and what courſe we purſue? Do we imagine, that he who made and upholds us, is an unconcerned ſpectator of our conduct? Can our hearts be reconciled to the idea of living under his diſapprobation? Can we contemplate the purity of his nature, and the defilement of our own, and not abhor ourſelves? Even angels, thoſe holy beings, vail their faces in his preſence. What humility then ſhould cover the face of guilty man? With what ſelf-abaſement ſhould he contemplate his own fallen condition? With what heart-felt penitence ſhould he reflect on his numerous tranſgreſſions? With what fervent deſires ſhould he ſeek the grace of God to purify his ſoul and make him meet for heavenly joys?

2. Moral evil is contrary to the deſign, for which we were created.

When we contemplate our nature as formed by the Deity, we ſee that we were made for a higher purpoſe than to obey the calls of appetite and luſt. We have within us the faculty of reaſon to diſ-

tinguiſh between good and evil, and the principle of conſcience to urge our choice of the one, and rejection of the other. While we regard iniquity in our hearts, there is a ſenſe of guilt, an involuntary ſelf-condemnation which attends us. By experience we find, that without the love of God and of virtue governing our conduct, there can be no rational happineſs. Ought we not to abhor that, which in its very nature, ſinks, degrades and ruins us? Ought we not, in our hearts, to deteſt, and in our practice, to avoid that, which in our reaſon we condemn? Shall rational beings act in ſuch contradiction to themſelves, as to purſue what they know to be miſerable, and chooſe what they ſee to be fatal? We call ourſelves rational; and we ſhew ourſelves ſuch, when we abhor evil, and cleave to that which is good.

3. The revelation, which God has given us, is deſigned to make us ſee the reality, and regard the importance of the matter, which we are now contemplating.

He has ſpoken to us from heaven, and demonſtrated the voice to be divine. He has ſent prophets, apoſtles, angels, and one greater than them all, to inſtruct, warn and perſuade us, to point out the path which leads to glory, and fence up the fatal track which goes down to the chambers of deſtruction: and ſhall we with blind infatuation, and headlong obſtinacy, leap over all barriers, and plunge down the dreadful precipice?

4. Conſider what the Saviour of men has ſuffered to deliver us from evil, and you will be convinced, that you ought to fly from it.

Our ſalvation from ſin and its conſequences, was the deſign of his coming into this world. To accompliſh this benevolent deſign, he bare our ſins in his own body on the croſs. Great was the

burden, which he ſuſtained, when God laid on him the iniquities of us all. View him in all the trying ſcenes of his life; eſpecially view him bleeding and dying on the accurſed tree. Recollect, that our ſins were the cauſe, and deliverance from them was the end of all his ſufferings; and then ſay, whether every ſin ought not to be your abhorrence? Will you chooſe that which he abhorred? Will you indulge that which cauſed his death? Will you retain that, from which he died to deliver you? Is there in man ſuch perverſeneſs of ſoul, ſuch ingratitude to a benefactor, and ſuch diſregard to himſelf? One would abhor the ſight of an enemy, who had ſlain a child, a brother or a friend. He would never chooſe for his companion the truculent ruffian, who had thus wounded and diſtreſſed him. Much rather ſhould we abhor our own ſins. Theſe have ſhed the Redeemer's blood—Theſe, if embraced in our boſom, will deſtroy our ſouls.

Remember farther,

5. All evil is oppoſite to the holy Spirit. God has no pleaſure in the death of the wicked. He calls them to turn and live. To the calls of his word he adds the ſecret motions of his own Spirit. The Spirit of God is holy in his nature and in his operations. His nature is oppoſite to evil, and his operations are to recover us from it.

His awakening and convincing influences on the minds of ſinners, are called *ſtriving with them.* Their continuance in ſin, is called *reſiſting him.* And will you not abhor that which is contrary to the Spirit of God—that which oppoſes his friendly operations—that which is ſo hateful to him, and fatal to you, that he is ſtriving to deliver you from it? Will you reſiſt ſuch kindly motions and grieve this heavenly viſitant?

Contemplate evil in any point of view, as contrary to the nature of God—to the deſign of revelation—to the end of your creation—to the purpoſe of Chriſt's death, and to the influence of the holy Spirit, and you will ſee, that it ought to be your abhorrence. And when you find that theſe views of ſin bring you to a real, habitual, univerſal abhorrence of it; and that this abhorrence, while it extends to all ſin, is more immediately pointed at your own, you may then conclude, that religion has place in your hearts.

We proceed now to illuſtrate,

Secondly, The other branch of our ſubject. *Cleave to that which is good.*

Religion begins in the renovation of the inward man; but it ends not there: it diſcovers itſelf in the works of righteouſneſs. The pure in heart will be holy in all manner of converſation. It is not now and then a good action, or a temporary appearance of goodneſs, which will prove the heart to be ſincere: there muſt be an *adherence* to that which is good.

1. We muſt cleave to *all* that is good, *without exception.*

In the new man,—"old things are paſt away, and all things are become new." He glorifies God in body and ſpirit. He yields himſelf a ſervant to God, and his members inſtruments of righteouſneſs to him.

We muſt be ready to every good work. If, in our reſolutions of obedience, we make exceptions and reſervations, it is not the will of God, but our own will, which governs us. The queſtion with us muſt be, not ſo much what will ſerve our worldly deſigns, as what will be acceptable in the ſight of God.

2. We muſt cleave to that which is good *with conſtancy*.

A variable goodneſs will not meet the divine approbation. Religion is "a patient continuance in well-doing." Of Judah and Ephraim God complains, "What ſhall I do unto you? Your goodneſs is a morning cloud; as the early dew it goeth away." Tranſient reſolutions and temporary reformations are not cleaving to, but trifling with, that which is good. There is a peculiar guilt attending the caſe of theſe ſhort-lived converſions. The man, who forms a reſolution in favour of religion, is convinced of its truth and importance; otherwiſe there would be no ground for the reſolution. Now if, after this, he abandon the ſerious purpoſe which he had made, and return to his ſinful courſe, he diſcovers greater ſtrength of luſt, greater oppoſition of heart to goodneſs, greater contempt of God, than if he never had been the ſubject of theſe convictions. Hence the apoſtle to the Hebrews repreſents it as peculiarly difficult "to renew thoſe again to repentance, who fall away, after they have been once enlightened, and have taſted the good word of God." The apoſtle Peter alſo ſays, "If after they have eſcaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Chriſt, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning."

There are ſome doubleminded men, who are unſtable in all their ways. They have ſo much ſenſe of the obligations of religion, that they dare not wholly diſregard them. They form good reſolutions, but never purſue them to effect. They feel inward convictions of ſin, but never carry them to a real repentance. Their luſts prevail, and ſmother their half-conceived purpoſes of vir-

tue. Their purpoſes again revive, and are again ſuppreſſed. Let not ſuch a man think, that he ſhall receive any thing of God. For though he ſhould never run to the ſame exceſs in vice as many others have done, being at times under ſtronger reſtraints from his own conviction, yet he goes more abreaſt againſt light, does greater violence to his conſcience, and more directly oppoſes the Spirit of grace, and conſequently may be more criminal in the ſight of God, than ſome who ſeem to ſin with a higher hand.

This thought deſerves the attention of thoſe, who have had frequent convictions and awakenings from the providence and Spirit of God, and yet never have really cleaved to that which is good. They ought to remember, that "for all theſe things God will bring them into judgment;" for in proportion as they have been favoured with more powerful excitements to religion, they are, while they neglect it, involving themſelves in more awful guilt, and filling up the meaſure of their ſins with more awful rapidity. If oppoſition to an awakened conſcience, and reſiſtance of a ſtriving Spirit, are aggravations of guilt, then we muſt conclude, that as ſinners have experienced theſe more frequently, and more powerfully, their guilt is on this account more dreadfully increaſing, as long as they continue impenitent and unreformed. Nor can they know how ſoon theſe favourable motions will ceaſe, and be ſucceeded by unfeeling hardneſs of heart.

3. We muſt cleave to that which is good, even when it is attended with *difficulty* and *danger*.

Though wiſdom's paths are paths of peace, yet we ſhall find many rough places, in which we muſt tread with caution, and walk with circumſpection, leſt we ſtumble, or be turned out of the

way. Our Saviour has warned us, that narrow is the way which leads to life, and ſtrait the gate by which we enter ; and he directs us to ſtrive with earneſtneſs—to preſs on with reſolution.

Difficulties and oppoſitions will ariſe from the corruptions of the heart, the examples of the ungodly, the temptations of evil ſpirits, and the objects of the world. But we muſt go on our way, and, " laying aſide every weight, run with patience the race ſet before us."

4. We muſt chooſe that which is good, though we be *ſingular* in our choice.

The man, who cleaves to God with purpoſe of heart, riſes ſuperior to the examples and enticements of the world. He walks, not as pleaſing men, but God who ſearcheth the heart. He deſires, indeed, the concurrence and aſſiſtance of others ; he wiſhes that all around him were zealouſly engaged in religion : thus his hands would be ſtrengthened, his reſolution animated, and his temptations weakened. But ſtill he reſolves, whatever choice others make, and whatever courſe they purſue, he will walk with God. Though he does not affect ſingularity, he had rather be ſingular, than wicked. He had rather ſtand alone in virtue, than join a multitude in vice. Though others think it ſtrange that he runs not with them to the ſame exceſs of riot, ſpeaking evil of him, yet he knows how to juſtify his own conduct. He will not be ridiculed out of his virtue, nor bring on himſelf the wrath of God, to eſcape the ſcoffs of men. He is gentle toward all men, but a ſervant to none in matters of religion. He is eaſy to be intreated in a reaſonable caſe, but he will not be perſuaded to violate his conſcience. " He will have no fellow-

ſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs, but will rather reprove them."

We have ſeen what it is, to cleave to that which is good. We will cloſe the ſubject with ſome arguments to confirm our reſolutions in well doing.

"Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" This will always be ſafe. There can be no real danger attending it? Whatever dangers you may apprehend, they are but imaginary. They are the ſuggeſtions of luſt, not of wiſdom. Can there be danger in daily prayer to God, in a pious regard to his providence, and in a reverence of his name? Can there be danger in righteouſneſs, benevolence and integrity toward men? Can there be danger in ſobriety, temperance, purity and meekneſs? Do theſe virtues expoſe you to any miſchiefs, from which the contrary vices would ſecure you?

The wicked man is often perplexed, what courſe to purſue, and what turns and ſhifts to make, that he may ſhun the evils which threaten him; and, after all his artifice, he runs into the very miſchief which he aims to avoid, or plunges himſelf into a greater by declining a leſs. The upright man needs no artifice. The way of ſafety lies plain before him. It is only to follow that which is good. "He who walks uprightly walks ſurely; his integrity will preſerve him."

"Great peace have they who love God's law, and nothing ſhall offend them." Whatever afflictions befall them, they have joy in the reflection, that their ſteady aim has been to approve themſelves to God.

"Jeſus," the great pattern of virtue, "went about doing good. He was holy, harmleſs, undefiled, ſeparate from ſinners." No dangers ever diverted him from the work which God gave him

to do. The more conſtantly we cleave to that which is good, the nearer we approach to his character.

The way of goodneſs leads to happiness. The pleaſure which the good man finds in religion here, is an earneſt of ſuperior happineſs hereafter. By experience he daily learns the tendency of virtue, and is perſuaded that there awaits him, in God's preſence, fulneſs of joy. Amidſt the changes of this mortal ſtate, he looks up to God with cheerful hope and confidence, that under the direction of perfect wiſdom, all things are working for his good; that, in the hands of infinite power, his future felicity is ſecure; and that theſe light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will prepare him for a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Conſcious that he has cleaved to that which is good, he contemplates, with a ſerene and cheerful mind, the gloomy change of death, viewing it as the happy period of all his painful labours, and his introduction to a world, where he ſhall receive an abundant reward.

That we may cleave to that which is good, let us make it our full and deliberate choice. Let us ſeek the ſpiritual renovation of the heart, a mind enlightened to the clear diſcernment of truth, and a temper moulded into a conformity to the character of God. Let us ever guard againſt the firſt departure from goodneſs; for one devious ſtep leads to another. When we begin to wander, we can preſcribe no bounds to tranſgreſſion. Let us entertain no ſentiments, which contradict moral rectitude. Such ſentiments, whatever arguments may be urged in their ſupport, muſt be falſe. Nothing can be true, which is contrary to moral goodneſs. Great familiarity with ourſelves

is neceſſary to conſtancy in religion. It is by the examination of our hearts, and the review of our actions, that we learn whether they are conformed to the will of God. It is thus that we make a ſeaſonable diſcovery of our errors, and correct them before we are led dangerouſly aſtray. Remembering our dependence on God, we muſt repair often to his throne for light to guide us, and grace to preſerve us in the way of goodneſs and truth.

Happy is the man who with the Pſalmiſt can ſay, "I have choſen the way of truth, thy judgments I have laid before me, I have ſtuck unto thy teſtimonies. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou ſhalt enlarge my heart."

SERMON XX.

Moral Reflections on Floods.

A Sermon delivered February 22, 1807.

AMOS ix. 5.

The Lord of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn, and it shall rise up wholly like a flood, and shall be drowned as by the flood of Egypt.

GREAT and important events are, in the sacred writings, often described by allusions to the sudden rise and extensive spread of waters. This metaphor is sometimes used to express *happy* events; but more frequently those which are *calamitous*. To the latter it is applied in our text.

The prophet foretels a desolation soon to come on the land of Israel by the invasion of their enemies. The sudden manner and irresistible force of the invasion, and the clean riddance which it should make of people and property he illustrates by a flood; particularly by a flood of Egypt,

when the river Nile, overflowing the lower country, compelled the inhabitants to retire with their ſubſtance to the higher grounds. "The Lord toucheth the land, and it ſhall melt;" ſhall ſeem to be at once diſſolved into water. "It ſhall riſe up wholly as a flood, and ſhall be drowned as by the flood of Egypt."

Floods of water naturally ſuggeſt to us many uſeful meditations, ſome of which may properly employ our minds this afternoon.

The winter hitherto has been moſt remarkable. A long courſe of intenſe cold has covered the ſtreams with prodigious maſſes of the firmeſt ice. The ſtreams, thus bridged over, have, thrice within three weeks, been ſuddenly ſwelled by copious rains to ſuch a height, as to ſweep off by the force of water and weight of ice, a great part of the mills, and moſt of the bridges, which ſtood upon them.

By reaſon of the increaſe of people, wealth, buſineſs and travelling, works of this kind have been greatly multiplied within a few years; the loſs ſuſtained therefore by individuals and by communities has been incalculable; and the embarraſſments, to which many travellers and ſome families are ſubjected, in conſequence of theſe deväſtations, is inconceivable.

Theſe floods, though diſaſtrous to property, may be conducive to the promotion of piety. With this view we will now contemplate them.

1. They lead us to realize the majeſty and ſupremacy of God.

Grand and ſtriking is the deſcriptive language of the prophet in our text. "The Lord of hoſts is he, that toucheth the earth, and it ſhall melt." The touch of his finger covers the earth with a flood, as ſuddenly, as if the ſolid ground were melt-

ed into a fluid maſs. The land riſeth into a flood. The prophet adds, "It is he that buildeth his ſtories in the heavens, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the ſea, and poureth them out on the earth; the Lord of hoſts is his name." We have a ſimilar deſcription of God's power in the book of Micah. "The Lord cometh forth from his place; he will come down and tread on the high places of the earth, and the mountains ſhall be molten under him, and the vallies ſhall be cleft; they ſhall be as wax before the fire, and as waters poured down a ſteep place." The ſame alluſions we find in the book of Pſalms. "The Lord is very great; he is clothed with honour and majeſty. He covereth himſelf with light, as with a garment; he ſtretcheth out the heavens like a curtain; he layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters; he maketh the clouds his chariot; he walketh on the wings of the wind. He laid the foundations of the earth; he covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters ſtood above the mountains. At his rebuke they fled; at the voice of his thunder they haſted away." God's ſovereign and abſolute diſpoſal of the mighty waters is adduced in the book of Job, as a demonſtration of his ſupreme and univerſal dominion. Thus ſpeaks the Almighty to his ſervant; "Who ſhut up the ſea with doors?—I made the cloud its garment, and thick darkneſs its ſwaddling band. I brake up for it my decreed place, and ſet bars and doors, and ſaid, Hitherto ſhalt thou come, and no farther, and here ſhall thy proud waves be ſtayed." God's controuling power over floods and mountains was manifeſted in a peculiar manner to the Jews, in their deliverance from Egypt, and introduction into Canaan. This is grandly deſcribed in one of the Pſalms. "When

Iſrael came out of Egypt, the houſe of Jacob from a people of a ſtrange language, Judah was his ſanctuary, and Iſrael his dominion. The ſea ſaw it and fled; Jordan was driven back. The mountains ſkipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O ſea, that thou fleddeſt; and thou Jordan, that thou waſt driven back? Ye mountains, that ye ſkipped like rams, and ye little hills like lambs! Tremble, thou earth, at the preſence of the Lord; at the preſence of the God of Jacob, who turneth the rock into ſtanding water, and the flint into a fountain of water." The prophet Jeremiah alledges, as a proof of the infidelity, and even brutality of the Jews, that they revered not God's preſence, when they had before them the moſt ſtriking evidences of it in the mighty ſwellings of the waters, and the effectual reſtraints under which they were held. "Hear now this, O fooliſh people, and without underſtanding, who have eyes, but ſee not; and ears, but hear not: fear ye not me? ſaith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my preſence? who have placed the ſand for the bound of the ſea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot paſs it; and though the waves thereof toſs themſelves, yet they cannot prevail; though they roar, yet can they not paſs over."

Floods exhibit to us a grand and aſtoniſhing ſpectacle. They ſwell the mind with the idea of awful and irreſiſtible power. They ſhew us the vanity and impotence of man. They demonſtrate the preſence of an inviſible Being, who alone maintains a dominion over them. They admoniſh us to revere his ſupreme majeſty, and truſt his continual care.

We ſee evidences of God's providence every where, and every day, but common and daily occurrences, being familiar to us, are eaſily over-

looked, or ſoon forgotten. Floods which are more rare appearances, unite their novelty with their grandeur, to attract the attention, affect the imagination and ſolemnize the mind.

2. Floods call our attention to the *wiſdom* and *goodneſs*, as well as to the power and majeſty of God.

Settlements bordering on ſeas, or contiguous to large rivers, are ſubject to inundations, which ſometimes ſpread wide devaſtations. Ordinarily, however, the tides of the ſea, and the ſwellings of rivers are ſo diſpoſed, as to be beneficial, not injurious to mankind.

The land of Egypt, where rains ſeldom fall, depends on the annual flowings of its river for the fertility of its ſoil. Low lands, bordering on large ſtreams, are enriched by floods. Theſe may ſometimes "waſh away the things, which grow out of the earth;" but uſually they render the earth more productive. And it is happy that, though they are abſolutely beyond *our* controul, they are always under the direction of the great governour of nature.

If the vaſt quantities of ſnow, which fall in the winter on the mountainous parts of the country, ſhould be diſſolved by copious rains and a ſteady warmth, the riſe of floods, and the impetuoſity of ſtreams would ſpread extenſive ruin; and the erection of bridges, mills and water works would be a fruitleſs labour. To prevent this calamity, the ſnow waters are uſually drained off in a gentle manner; vernal rains are ſhort; warm days are followed with cool nights; the riſing flood is checked by a change of weather. Thus the ſnows are taken off without imminent danger to man or material injury to property, and with ſenſible benefit to the ſoil.

It is a kindneſs in providence, that high floods ſeldom come in that ſeaſon of the year, when our fruits are in the field. Such repeated inundations, as we have ſeen of late, coming in midſummer, or in early autumn, would ſweep off the fruits of our fields and meadows, and be followed with extenſive ſcarcity. And if ſuch unſeaſonable floods were frequent, the rich intervales contiguous to rivers would be deſerted, and our beſt lands lie uncultivated.

It is an inſtance of divine goodneſs, that floods are attended with ſome degree of regularity, ſo that ordinarily we know when to expect them, and what precautions to take for ſecurity againſt them.

Let us learn to truſt that benevolent Being, who orders ſnows and rains, ſtorms and floods for the benefit of the human kind.

3. Floods remind us of our own *impotence*, and of our *dependence on God.*

We ſee, that it is not in *our* power to order the time when they ſhall come, or when they ſhall retire ; to preſcribe the height to which they ſhall riſe, or the extent to which they ſhall ſpread ; to divert their courſe, or repreſs their impetuoſity. All theſe circumſtances are directed by a ſuperior power—by him who gathers the winds in his fiſts, and meaſures the waters in the hollow of his hand. Equally dependent are we in every thing—equally impotent in every condition. But ſuch ſcenes are now and then preſented to us, that impreſſed with a ſenſe of our weakneſs, and of God's governing providence, we may never truſt in ourſelves, but in all our ways may acknowledge him.

4. Floods, coming in an unuſual time and manner, teach us the *uncertainty* of human deſigns and the *precarioufneſs* of worldly property.

Floods though ordinarily diſpoſed in mercy, may ſometimes come for correction. So Elihu obſerves; "God by watering wearieth the thick cloud, which is turned about by his counſels to do whatſoever he commandeth on the face of the world; and he cauſeth it to come, whether for correction, or for the land, or for mercy."

A general deluge was the judgment, by which God puniſhed the wickedneſs of the old world. Partial inundations have often ſpread deſolation to a wide extent on lands adjacent to ſeas and rivers. The ſwelling tide urged by violent winds has ruſhed in far upon the land, laid towns and cities waſte, driven ſhips from their moorings far upon the ſolid ground, where houſes and ſtores have ſtood; and, at the ſame time, has ſwept houſes and ſtores with their treaſures and owners into the ocean, where ſhips were moored. Rivers, raiſed by mighty rains or the ſudden diſſolution of ſnows, have borne away with impetuous force the works and labours of men, their flocks and herds, their habitations and riches.

Such floods are to be regarded as calamities, not only to the immediate ſufferers, but alſo to communities. They may, however, like other calamities, be uſeful in a moral view, to admoniſh us of the vanity and inſtability of earthly things, and to direct our thoughts to better objects. The late floods, coming in an unuſual ſeaſon, riſing one after another in quick ſucceſſion, and bearing on with them immenſe quantities of heavy and ſolid ice, have produced diſaſtrous effects never before known, to ſuch an extent, ſince our country was inhabited.

We ſee how eaſily the hand of God can blaſt the expectations, fruſtrate the deſigns, and deſtroy the works of men. Let us ſeek a city which

hath foundations, and there lay up treaſures, which floods and ſtorms cannot annoy.

5. Unuſual floods remind us of God's power to *puniſh*, or *protect* us, according as we *offend* or *obey* him.

He who can ſwell the waters to overflow us, can let looſe enemies to invade us. He who can repreſs the angry floods, can reſtrain the rage of men.

The inroads of enemies are often compared to the irruption of waters. Their defeat and diſappointment to the ſtilling of waves and the drying up of rivers. The prophet foretels a time, "When the enemy ſhall come in like a flood, but the Spirit of the Lord ſhall lift up a ſtandard againſt him." The Pſalmiſt uſes the ſame ſimilitude; "The God of our ſalvation is the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off on the ſeas; he by his ſtrength ſetteth faſt the mountains, and ſtilleth the noiſe of the ſea, the noiſe of the waves, and the tumult of the people." "The ſorrows of death compaſſed me; the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. In my diſtreſs I called upon the Lord. He ſent forth his arrows and ſcattered them. Then the channels of waters were ſeen, the foundations of the world were diſcovered. He ſent from above, and drew me out of many waters."

Men, when their paſſions are calm and undiſturbed, like natural ſtreams of water, move harmleſs within their bounds, and glide gently along in their proper channels. But if pride, ambition, avarice, wrath and revenge once take the command of them, then like the ſea agitated with ſtorms, or like rivers ſwelled to floods, they ruſh on impetuous and carry deſtruction with them. Obſerve the ſame man guided by ſober reaſon, and

urged by blind paſſion, and you will ſee him as different from himſelf, as is the gentle rill from the headlong torrent.

There was no evil on earth which David ſo much deprecated, as ſubjection to the power of a mortal enemy. When the choice was offered him of ſeven years famine, three days peſtilence, or three months flight before his enemies, he anſwered, "Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for great are his mercies; but let me not fall into the hand of man."

It is happy for us, that he who rules the ſeas and reſtrains the floods, can repreſs the paſſions and controul the deſigns of men. "The wrath of man ſhall praiſe him, and the remainder of that wrath he will reſtrain."

6. Floods remind us of our *mutable* and *mortal* condition. Under a general ſentence of mortality on the nation of Iſrael, Moſes ſaid, "Thou carrieſt them away as with a flood."

Time, like a ſtream, is rolling on, nor ſtops its courſe by day nor by night. Yea, it ruſhes forward with rapidity like a river ſwelled to a flood.

Streams bend their courſe in various directions; but all, whatever direction they take, tend to the ocean, where their waters are ſwallowed up and loſt. Men have their different objects and purſuits; but all are alike haſtening to the grave; all are preſſing forward to the world of eternal retribution.

All the rivers run into the ſea, and would ſoon ceaſe, were they not continued by a ſucceſſion of waters. The human race is preſerved by a ſucceſſion of mortals. One generation paſſes away, and another comes. Thus the inhabitants of the earth abide from age to age. The race is called the ſame, but the mortals, which compoſe it,

like the waters which conſtitute a river, are changing every day and every hour.

It would be wiſe for us often to reflect on our tranſient condition. We are paſſing away like the floods; we have no abiding place on earth. Let us not ſet our affection on things below, but look forward to that world, to which we are going. Would a man hurried down a rapid ſtream, exult in his riches, becauſe he paſſed along in ſight of meadows, fields, groves, and houſes? Would he call theſe his own, becauſe he beheld them, and only juſt beheld them with his eyes? Why ſhould we, who are hurried through life, and carried away as with a flood, glory in the worldly objects, which we ſee, as we paſs along, but ſcarcely have time to poſſeſs?

We are changing our condition, and our relation to things around us. We are paſſing from place to place, from object to object, from ſcene to ſcene, like men floating down a ſtream. This moment flies, the next ſucceeds, and goes off like the former, giving place to a ſucceſſor. One enjoyment, or amuſement departs, and another comes. One deſign, or employment is defeated or laid aſide, and another taken up. Here we hope for better ſucceſs. Here, again diſappointed, we change our purpoſe. We walk in a vain ſhow; we are diſquieted in vain. Like men thrown out on a flood, we ſtruggle for ſhore; we pant for reſt; we ſeize the twig; it breaks; we are driven with the ſtream; we graſp the leaf; we ſink; we paſs from human ſight, and are ſoon forgotten.

There is nothing ſtable here below; no firm object by which we can hold, no ſolid ground on which we can ſtand. The anchor of our hope muſt be fixed in the grace and goodneſs, the promiſe and faithfulneſs of God.

A flood is not only rapid, but violent in its progreſs. No works of art can reſtrain it. And no man hath power over death. As well may we invert the downward ſtream and remand it back to its ſource; as well may we repreſs the riſing flood or ſcoop it from its channel, as finally prevent the approach, or repel the attack of death. There is an appointed time to man upon earth, and the bounds appointed him he cannot paſs. It is God who holds our ſouls in life, and whoſe viſitation preſerves our ſpirits. When he takes away our breath, we die. When he brings down to the duſt, who can raiſe himſelf up? When he ſmites, who can deliver out of his hands?

A flood is a metaphor uſed in ſcripture to denote *ſudden* deſtruction. The prophet ſays, "The Lord hath a mighty and ſtrong one, which as a deſtroying ſtorm, and a flood of mighty waters overflowing, ſhall caſt down to the earth." Job ſays of the hypocrite, "He buildeth his houſe as a moth, and as a booth which the keeper maketh. Terrors take hold on him as waters, a ſtorm hurleth him out of his place."

Various are the means by which, and the ways in which, men are removed out of life. Concerning the manner of our own death we can form no certain judgment. But ſince many of our fellow mortals are removed in a ſudden manner, we ſhould all act on the ſuppoſition, that our removal may be as ſudden. Our Saviour admoniſhes us, that, as we know not at what hour he will come, we ought always to watch, leſt coming ſuddenly he find us ſleeping.

We all, like a flood, which rolls on and returns not again, are going the way, whence we ſhall not return. We are paſſing, as the wind, which cometh not again; the place which has known us,

will know us no more. How indifferent ſhould we be to theſe worldly intereſts, which ſoon we muſt relinquiſh, and never repoſſeſs! How diligently ſhould we improve the ſeaſon, which ſoon muſt end, and never be renewed? "What our hands find to do, let us do it with our might; there is no work in the grave."

To a time of prevailing mortality the metaphor is peculiarly applicable. In reference to ſuch a time Moſes ſays, "Thou carrieſt them away as with a flood." But at all times men are mortal; are doomed to duſt; are haſtening to the grave. Time, like a riſing flood, ſweeps them all away without diſtinction.

The ſwelling river takes up all objects within its reach, and drives them down its current. Death makes no difference; it bears away the ſmall and the great, the poor and the rich, the old and the young, the worthleſs and the uſeful. They are all ſwimming down the ſtream of time together, like the various materials which cover the ſurface of a flood. If at one time, they croud thicker, and roll faſter, than at another, yet they are all conſtantly hurried downward, and will ſoon be thrown into the boundleſs ocean.

We ſee, then, the true end and uſe of life. It is to prepare for death, and the eternity which will follow. How unaccountable is the folly of mortals! They know that death is before them; and how ſeldom they think of it? They ſee others ſwept away with the flood, and hardly conſider themſelves as within the ſtream. What multitudes periſh "without any regarding it?"

The uncertainty of the time of death, our Lord urges as an argument for watchfulneſs. Fooliſh man makes it an argument for careleſſneſs. If the certainty of death be a reaſon for preparation, the

uncertainty of the time is a reaſon for immediate preparation. The event is too important to be neglected finally. It may be too near to be neglected at all. The leaſt delay is preſumption, for none knows, but it may be fatal.

Floods teach us to make firm thoſe works, which may be expoſed to their violence. And they remind us of the wiſdom of laying well the foundation of our religion, that it may ſtand ſafe againſt the moſt trying ſtorms.

In erecting works on ſtreams we calculate for floods, not merely for calm waters. In the works of religion we are to take ſimilar precautions. We muſt expect in our Chriſtian courſe ſome rough and tempeſtuous weather; not continual ſerenity and ſunſhine. We muſt look to conſequences; count the coſt; lay out for croſſes and trials, and form our reſolutions accordingly. A haſty, ſuperficial religion, like other ſlender and careleſs works, will yield to winds and floods.

If the neceſſary works, which we conſtruct on ſtreams, are injured, or borne away by floods, we do not abandon them as untenable, or unworthy the hazard. We endeavor to profit by experience. We enquire, where was the defect, and in a new conſtruction rectify the error, and guard againſt the danger, which before was unthought of. And if we meet with difficulties in our religious work, we muſt not renounce it as impracticable, but proceed with more watchful prudence, and more firm reſolution. We muſt grow wiſer by conviction of paſt follies, and ſtronger by experience of former weakneſs.

Our religion muſt be built on the foundation of God's word; it muſt be united to the foundation by love of the truth; it muſt be ſtrengthened and ſupported by faith in God's promiſe and grace;

it must be kept in good repair by the steady practice of the various duties, of which it consists. Thus it will abide in the day of trial. This is the instruction given by our Saviour. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven. Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, him will I liken unto a wise man, who built his house on a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth my sayings, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." Take heed therefore how you build; for every man's work will be tried, of what sort it is. Not only lay well the foundation, but rear the structure with firm materials, well compacted together, that they may resist the flood, and weather the storm. If your building perish, you will suffer loss; if it abide you will receive a rich reward.

SERMON XXI.

The Impiety of alledging God's Promiſe, as a reaſon for the neglect of Duty.

MATTHEW iv. 5, 6, 7.

Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and ſetteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and ſaith unto him, If thou be the ſon of God, caſt thyſelf down; for it is written, He ſhall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they ſhall bear thee up, leſt at any time thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone. Jeſus ſaid unto him, It is written, Thou ſhalt nôt tempt the Lord thy God.

THE devil from the beginning of the world, has been an enemy to mankind. On our firſt parents he brought death by ſeducing them from their obedience to God. The deſign of our redemption he endeavored to defeat by tempting the Redeemer to deſtroy himſelf. In both caſes he uſed the ſame artifice, a perverſion of the word of God. In the former caſe he perverted the divine *threatening;* in the latter, the divine *promiſe.* He told our firſt parents, that though they ſhould eat of the forbidden fruit, they would not ſurely die: he told our Redeemer, that though he ſhould caſt himſelf down from a pinnacle of the temple, he would ſurely live. The tree of knowledge God had guarded by a threatening of death. Satan,

alledged, that this threatening did not really intend what it ſeemed to import. God had promiſed the Redeemer, that, during the time of his miniſtry, he ſhould be under the protection of angels, who would keep him in all his ways. Satan interpreted this promiſe, as containing more than was really intended; and in proof of his interpretation, he urged, that if Jeſus ſhould caſt himſelf down from the temple, no hurt would enſue.

The promiſe, which he adduced, is in the 91ſt Pſalm. "There ſhall no evil befall thee—for he ſhall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways; they ſhall bear thee up in their hands, leſt thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone." That this promiſe had a reſpect, as to good men in general, ſo to the Son of God in particular, is evident from the words, which follow; "Thou ſhalt tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon ſhalt thou trample under feet." The devil, in his temptation of Eve, preſented himſelf in the *form* of a *ſerpent*. Hence, both in the Old Teſtament and the New, he is called by the name of a *ſerpent*, an *adder*, and a *dragon*. The conqueſt of the ſeed of the woman over ſatan the tempter, is expreſſed by his bruiſing the *ſerpent's* head. In this paſſage quoted from the 91ſt Pſalm, there is an evident alluſion to the ſentence on the ſerpent. Hence it is natural to conclude, that the whole promiſe had a peculiar reſpect to him, who was to tread ſatan under his feet; and enſured to him the ſpecial protection of divine providence, until this work ſhould be accompliſhed. The devil juſtly applies this promiſe to Chriſt; but he wickedly leaves out a part of it, and perverts the meaning of the whole. He inſinuates, that as Jeſus was under a promiſe of divine protection, he had no occaſion to take care of

himſelf; and whatever he might do, the promiſe would ſecure him. "If thou be the Son of God;" If thou be the promiſed ſeed of the woman, who was to be born without the intervention of man, and therefore eminently to be called *the Son of God;* if thou be that perſon, as, by a voice from heaven thou waſt juſt now declared to be, then, to make it manifeſt to the multitude aſſembled below, "caſt thyſelf down from this pinnacle; for it is written, He ſhall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands ſhall they bear thee up, leſt thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone."

The devil here leaves out a material clauſe. The promiſe was, that the Meſſiah ſhould be kept, *in all his ways.* The devil, omitting theſe laſt words, inſinuates, that Jeſus, if he was the Son of God, would be kept, even though he went *out of his way*, and caſt himſelf down from the pinnacle. Thus the emiſſaries of ſatan often mutilate the ſcripture, when they pretend to quote it. To prove that religion conſiſts, not at all in piety to God, but wholly in the ſocial virtues, juſtice and mercy, the authority of the prophet has been adduced; "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but *to do juſtly and to love mercy?*"—The words immediately following, "*and to walk humbly with thy God,*" are omitted, becauſe theſe injoin piety. This is quoting ſcripture, as the devil quoted the paſſage in the Pſalms.

And as ſatan mutilates, ſo he perverts the paſſage. He argues from it, on this falſe principle, that where God has promiſed an event; there is no occaſion for human means—that the event promiſed will take place, let men do what they can, or omit what they will. Chriſt anſwers, "It is written, Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God." His words import, That to plead God's

promise as a reason for the neglect of plain duty, is not to trust, but to abuse his promise—not to secure, but forfeit his care.

The devil, in his attempt on the Saviour, failed of success: but among the wicked and unbelieving part of mankind he finds this artifice to have great effect. In Christ there was nothing, but in men there is much, to favour his temptations.

Our Lord always acted, and he taught his disciples to act on this principle, "That the providence of God over men is exercised in concurrence with human means, and that, where the proper means are neglected, the care of providence is forfeited." Jesus had a promise of God's protection; but "he did not commit himself to men, for he knew what was in men." And, until the time of his death was come, he took the same precautions to shun dangers, and to preserve his life, as if no such promise had ever been made. He assured his disciples, that during their ministry, the hand of providence would be employed in their defence; but yet he instructed them to consult their own safety by all prudent and honest means. "If they persecute you in this city, flee to another." "I send you forth as sheep among wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." He promised them, that "if they should take up serpents, or drink any deadly thing, they should not be hurt." This promise was a great security, while they adhered to their duty; but no longer. If their enemies should attempt to destroy them by serpents, or by poison, God's providence would preserve them. But if they themselves, in pride, vanity and ostentation, should handle serpents, or drink deadly poison, the promise would be no defence.

There is, in the divine government, a connexion between means and ends—between conditions and promiſes. If we attempt to break this connexion, we rebel againſt that order, which is a ſupreme law of heaven, and yield ourſelves to the dominion of the devil. He would perſuade men to diſregard this connexion, and to rely on promiſes without performing conditions.

After Noah's egreſs from the ark, God promiſed him, that "while the earth remained, ſeed time and harveſt ſhould not ceaſe." What if every man, relying on the promiſe of a harveſt, ſhould neglect ſeed time? Would there be a harveſt? Or, if there were none, would God violate his promiſe? By no means. The promiſe evidently intends this, and no more than this; that generally the courſe of the ſeaſons ſhould be regular and favorable, and where ſeed time was improved, a harveſt would follow. But ſtill, "if the ſluggard will not plow by reaſon of the cold, he ſhall beg in harveſt and have nothing." God fulfils his promiſe in giving the times of ſowing and gathering, and in cauſing his ſun to ſhine and his rains to fall upon our fields. His bleſſing does not fail. But if we neglect the neceſſary means of obtaining a harveſt, we caſt away the bleſſing, and can claim no benefit from the promiſe.

There is, perhaps, no promiſe in the bible expreſſed more abſolutely, than this of a harveſt; and yet every man knows, how to underſtand it. I preſume, no man, on the foot of this promiſe, ever refuſed to ſow his ſeed, or, when he had ſown it, left it to be devoured by beaſts; for every man knows, that though harveſt in general do not ceaſe, yet *he* ſhall have none, unleſs he take the neceſſary ſteps to obtain one. The ſluggard, who will not ſow, never thinks of charging the

barrenneſs of his field to the unfaithfulneſs of God. For in matters, which relate to the neceſſary buſineſs of life, men uſually reaſon and judge right. It is in things, which reſpect religion, that they moſt frequently abuſe and pervert the promiſes of God, and admit the doctrine of the devil, that where God has declared his intention of an end, we need not do any thing to obtain the end, or avoid any thing through fear of defeating it.

We will conſider ſome caſes, in which men reaſon with themſelves, and with one another, juſt as ſatan reaſoned with our Saviour.

I. Some ſay, "The ſcripture declares, that God would have all men to be ſaved, and none to periſh, and that he gave his Son to be a ranſom for all." "Now," ſay they, "if it be God's will that *all* ſhould be ſaved, and the Son of God have ranſomed *all*, then all *will* be ſaved; for who can reſiſt God's will, or defeat his purpoſe? His power is equal to his benevolence; both are infinite, and the end is certain. It is then of no importance, what men believe, or what they do. The vicious and impenitent are as ſafe, as the penitent and virtuous, and infidels are as ſafe as believers."

But all this reaſoning is founded in a perverſion of ſcripture, and of nature.

1. It is founded in a perverſion of ſcripture.

This, indeed, ſays, "God would not that any ſhould periſh." But it adds, "He would that all ſhould come to repentance." It ſays, "He would have all men be ſaved." And it ſubjoins, "He would have them come to the knowledge of the truth." The paſſages therefore teach us, that unleſs ſinners and unbelievers do repent and embrace the truth, they cannot be ſaved, but muſt periſh. The goſpel, indeed, aſſerts, that "Chriſt gave himſelf a ranſom for all." But how for all?—

Not that all might be ſaved in their ſins; but "that the mercy of God might be unto all them, who believe." "The grace of God, which brings ſalvation, has appeared to all, teaching them to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly, and thus to look for the hope of ſalvation through Chriſt, who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from iniquity, and purify us unto himſelf."

2. The reaſoning under conſideration is as contrary to nature, as it is to ſcripture. For habitual wickedneſs is, in itſelf, inconſiſtent with rational happineſs. If the impenitent ſinner is to be happy in his impenitence, the whole ſyſtem of nature muſt be inverted. The goſpel ſcheme was introduced, not to preſcribe to men arbitrary terms of happineſs, but to propoſe to them ſuch terms as are eſſential to their happineſs. They are not in danger from the goſpel, but from their diſobedience to the goſpel. It is not this, which has made ſin the cauſe of miſery. It is the nature of ſin to produce miſery. Grace has interpoſed for our deliverance. If we will not accept this deliverance, we muſt take the conſequence of our perverſeneſs.

II. The ſame abuſe is often made of the doctrine of *Election.*

That there is a divine election of perſons to eternal life, the ſcripture tells us; and ſerious people, though they may differ in their manner of ſtating it, yet generally admit it in ſubſtance. To explain this doctrine is not our preſent intention, but to correct the abuſe of it.

There are ſome licentious people, who, either fooliſhly miſtaking, or wickedly perverting the doctrine, plead it in excuſe for the neglect of plain duty, and for the indulgence of palpable iniquity.

They ſay, "If there be a certain number choſen to ſalvation, and all the reſt be reprobated to deſtruction, why need we concern ourſelves about the matter? We cannot alter the decree of God. If we be elected to ſalvation, our impenitence will not deprive us of it; and if we be reprobated to miſery, our repentance will not ſave us from it. We may reſign ourſelves to our fate, for the purpoſe of God will ſtand."

But where do you find in ſcripture ſuch a kind of election as this? We are told, that God hath choſen us to ſalvation through ſanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; but not that any are appointed to ſalvation without faith and holineſs. We are directed to make our election ſure by adding to our faith all the virtues of the Chriſtian character; and we are told, that if we do thus, we ſhall never fall: but we are no where taught, that election is made ſure to men, whether they have in them theſe virtues or not. Whatever may be our different conceptions of God's decrees, ſo much is plain, that the ſcripture teaches no decrees, but ſuch as aſcertain the end in a courſe of means, and enſure benefits on certain qualifications and conditions. Our buſineſs is with the means and conditions. By the obſervance of theſe we are to ſecure the bleſſings—not to expect the bleſſings in the neglect of theſe. To argue from election, that there is no need of our attending to our own ſalvation, is to adopt the reaſoning of ſatan, who would have Chriſt plunge himſelf headlong from a pinnacle of the temple, relying on God's promiſe, that angels ſhould bear him up in their hands, and his foot ſhould not be daſhed againſt a ſtone.

The goſpel makes the offer, deſcribes the nature, and ſtates the terms of ſalvation. The

terms are repentance of sin, and faith in the Redeemer. On our compliance with these terms, salvation is secured to us by promise. While we reject them we are under condemnation. Thus far our duty is plain, and the way of salvation is obvious. It is also certain, that there is no hidden purpose, which will set aside God's express word. He is of one mind; none can turn him. "Secret things belong to God; things which are revealed belong to us, that we may do the words of his law."

Though many from the decree of God argue themselves into licentiousness in their moral conduct, yet none of them will allow the same argument to influence their worldly conduct. No man will throw himself down a precipice, depending for security on a decree, which has fixed the bounds of life. No man will say, that if his term of life be not run out, a fall cannot hurt him. No man, in a dangerous sickness, will neglect the means of his recovery, presuming, that the decree of God will save him without means. No man lets seed time pass unimproved on presumption that the decree of God will bring him a harvest, without seeding or cultivating his ground. Here most men argue rationally, and act prudently. They believe, that there is a regular providence, on which they are dependent for every thing, and that, in order to receive the blessing of providence, they must occupy the powers, and apply the means, which they possess. Here the government of providence is an argument for industry. Whence is it, that so many argue differently in matters of religion?—The reason is obvious. The duties of religion are disagreeable to them, and they wish to be excused from them. The interests of the world are pleasing to them, and these they pursue

with ardour ; and hence the ſame doctrine, which is an argument for negligence in the former caſe, is an argument for diligence in this.

III. In much the ſame manner ſome abuſe the doctrine of God's grace in the *converſion* of ſinners.

The ſcripture often tells us, that we are ſaved by grace—that our renovation is a work of God—that faith is his gift. Hence ſerious and humble ſouls take encouragement to work out their ſalvation ; for if the grace of God works in them, there is hope, that they may work with ſucceſs. But the negligent and careleſs argue differently. They reaſon with themſelves, as the devil reaſoned with our Saviour. They ſay, " If converſion be the work of God, then it is not our work, and we need not concern ourſelves about it. God needs not our help to accompliſh the purpoſe of his grace. If he is pleaſed to effect a ſaving change in us, we ſhall be ſaved ; if not, we muſt ſuffer the conſequence, and we cannot prevent it."

Now this ſame argument you may juſt as well uſe in your ſecular buſineſs. You at once ſee the abſurdity of it in this caſe : it is equally abſurd in the other. It is not pretended, that you can renew your own ſouls, and prepare them for heaven, independently of God. But repentance and faith muſt be your own acts and exerciſes. And you are to conſider, that God, of his free and ſovereign grace, has put into your hands the means of faith and repentance, and affords the influence of his good Spirit to accompany them. While, therefore, you are in the uſe of theſe means, you are in the way, in which God ordinarily grants his bleſſing. Attend on the means and truſt God's grace, as you attend on your ſecular buſineſs and truſt his providence, for ſucceſs.

" But is it not diſhonoring the grace of God to

think, that we must do any thing for our salvation?" Let me ask, Is it not dishonouring the providence of God to think, that you must do any thing for your daily bread? It is not dishonouring God to seek his blessing in the way, which he has prescribed. If you presume on his grace in any other way, you do not magnify, but mock it—you do not trust, but tempt the Lord.

IV. The doctrine of the final *perseverance* of the saints has often been perverted, in the same manner, as other doctrines of grace.

The gospel teaches us that true believers "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."—That "they who are born of God, do not commit sin," or yield themselves to it to obey it, for in the language of scripture, "He that committeth sin, is a servant of sin." They who are born of God, "do not thus commit sin; for their seed remaineth in them, and they cannot sin, because they are born of God."

Some will say, "This certain perseverance of saints we fully believe, and we trust we have been born of God. Our salvation therefore is sure, for God's promise will never fail. We may live as we list; we may return to our sins, and be safe; for they will never separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."

But do you call this perseverance?—It is apostacy; and such a kind of apostacy as too clearly proves, that you never were born of God; for it is the character of him, who is born of God, that he does not commit sin, or become a servant of sin. What? Because God has promised his grace to preserve true believers unto salvation, will you conclude, that you shall obtain salvation, even though you pervert this grace to encourage yourselves in iniquity? Such perversion of grace is an

evidence, that you are not true believers. You are never to depend on any paſt experiences, as evidential of a new heart, unleſs theſe experiences are permanent in their operations and effects. The promiſe of eternal life is made to thoſe, who ſeek it by a patient continuance in well doing. If you refuſe to ſeek it in this manner, you have no title to the promiſe. "If any man draw back, God has no pleaſure in him.

The believer's ſecurity is not in a promiſe, that he ſhall obtain ſalvation even though he ſhould return to a courſe of ſin; for there is no ſuch promiſe: but it lies in a promiſe of all neceſſary grace to prevent a total and final relapſe. This grace he obtains by waiting on God in his appointed way. This is the language of godly ſouls, "Shall we ſin, becauſe we are under a promiſe of grace? God forbid. How ſhall we, who are dead to ſin, live any longer therein?"

V. When any meaſures are propoſed for the ſpread and promotion of the goſpel, they who, from unbelief or avarice, are unfriendly to ſuch meaſures, often ſay, "God has promiſed, that he will give his Son the heathens for his inheritance, and the utmoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion: and will he not make good his promiſe? What occaſion is there for us to be at any expence or trouble in the matter?

This is arguing exactly as ſatan argued. "Caſt thyſelf down from the temple, for God has promiſed, that he will give his angels charge of thee." It is, indeed, plainly foretold, and expreſsly promiſed, that the goſpel ſhall ſpread and prevail in the world; and we believe the event will be realized. But then it is alſo foretold, how this event will be brought about: it ſhall be by the zeal and labour of Chriſtians to ſend the goſpel abroad in the

world. And whenever we ſee Chriſtians remarkably engaged to extend the knowledge and influence of the goſpel, then we may hope the good work is begun. God will bring to paſs this work, as he does other great works, for the benefit of mankind, not by an immediate and miraculous power, but by employing, ſupporting and ſucceeding human labourers, as his ſubordinate agents.

The ſpread of the goſpel after Chriſt's reſurrection, was agreeable to previous predictions and promiſes; but it was effected by the labour and preaching of miniſters, and by the zeal and liberality of Chriſtians to ſupport them. And God wrought with his miniſters to confirm and ſucceed their preaching. The future ſpread of the goſpel, which is ſo often foretold in ſcripture, will, like the paſt, be effected by God's bleſſing on human means.

God has promiſed, that the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt his church. "Why then," ſome aſk, "need Chriſtians and miniſters be ſo much concerned about the church? Why ſo much talk and preaching in favour of the church, and againſt infidelity? If the promiſe can be depended upon, infidels will never ſubvert the church."

They never will; becauſe there will always be a competent number of witneſſes to oppoſe and confront them, and to bear teſtimony againſt them, and in defence of the truth. And, thank God, there is ſuch a number in this day. But if the time were ever to come, when there would be none to plead for the truth, but all would ſilently yield to the influence and comply with the will of its enemies, the church would ceaſe of courſe. We truſt that there never will be ſuch a time. This may be the caſe in particular places.

And wherever it is the caſe, the church in that place, will ceaſe, as it has done already, in many other places, where it once exiſted. But it will, at no time, be the caſe univerſally. There will always be a church ſomewhere. If it ſhould ſeem to be depreſſed, yet it will exiſt, and will again ariſe from its depreſſion. And the time is coming, when all nations will ſee and admire it. In the mean time, we ſhould all be ſolicitous to maintain it among ourſelves. We ſhould all enter into it, labor to promote its purity, and, according to our ability, contribute to the enlargement of its borders, and the advancement of its intereſt. And in a day, when a great and effectual door is opened, when many of the friends of Zion ſeem to be engaged in her cauſe, and when there are many adverſaries, we ſhould cheerfully afford our aid and concurrence in ſo important a cauſe.

Our ſubject teaches us, that neither in this caſe, nor any other, ought we to make the promiſes of God an excuſe for the neglect of our duty. The good which God promiſes to men, he always brings about in a way of means, and in concurrence with human agency. And if, when God has promiſed a benefit, we, for this reaſon, neglect the proper means for obtaining it, we pervert the promiſe, and forfeit the benefit. God's promiſes are intended, not to encourage our neglect, but to excite our performance, of the duties required. We are to truſt in him, and do good, and in welldoing to commit ourſelves to him, as to a faithful Creator. When we wait upon him in the way of duty, then we truſt and honour him. When preſuming on his promiſe, we neglect our duty, we tempt and mock him. And it is written, "Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

SERMON XXII.

The Anointing of the Spirit a ſure evidence of our Title to eternal life.

Delivered to an Association of Ministers.

I. JOHN ii. 27.

But the anointing, which ye have received of him, abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the ſame anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye ſhall abide in him.

THE apoſtle here ſtates the evidence by which believers aſcertain their title to eternal life. This, he ſays, is the anointing, which they have received. What this anointing is, we ſhall, in the firſt place, explain; and then apply the ſubject.

Anointing with oil was a ceremony uſed, according to divine inſtitution, among the Jews, in conſecrating men to ſacred and important offices. And the deſign of it was, not only to indigitate the perſons who were veſted with the offices, but

alſo to denote the qualifications neceſſary to the execution of them. It in ſome caſes ſignified an eminent participation of the gifts and graces of the divine Spirit. The prophet Iſaiah, ſpeaking in the perſon of the Saviour, ſays, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, becauſe he hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek." God is ſaid "to have anointed him with the oil of gladneſs above his fellows." Hence he is often called the *Meſſiah* and the *Chriſt*, both which words ſignify the *Anointed*.

As Jeſus Chriſt, who received the Spirit without meaſure, is ſaid to be *anointed* and *ſanctified* to the high office of *Redeemer*, ſo true believers, who are ſanctified by the Spirit, and have the Spirit dwelling in them, are ſaid "to have an *unction* from the Holy One. St. Paul ſays to the Corinthians, "He who hath *anointed* us in God, who hath *ſealed* us, and given the earneſt of the Spirit in our hearts." To the Epheſians he ſays, "After ye heard the word of truth, and believed in Chriſt, ye were ſealed with the Holy Spirit of promiſe, which is the earneſt of our inheritance."

The *ſealing* of the Spirit is a metaphor, which St. Paul uſes, to denote the ſanctifying work of the Spirit in the hearts of believers. As a ſeal impreſſed on wax leaves there its own image, ſo they, who are ſanctified by the Spirit, are made partakers of the divine nature. They are renewed after the image of God in righteouſneſs and true holineſs. And he uſes the metaphor of *anointing* in the ſame ſenſe. "He who hath *anointed* and *ſealed* us, is God." As ointment and perfume pleaſe the ſenſe and rejoice the heart, ſo the graces of the Spirit ſhed abroad in the ſoul, are pleaſing and acceptable to God. They are as oint-

ment poured forth. In them he ſmells a ſweet ſavour.

This unction of the Spirit is a *permanent* work. Our apoſtle ſays, "The anointing, which ye have received of God, *abideth* in you." In the literal anointing, oil is poured on the head. In the ſpiritual anointing grace is poured into the heart. The former evaporates; the latter abides.

There may, indeed, be a work of the Spirit, which does not abide. "The Spirit is ſent to convince the world of ſin." The convictions, of which ſinners are the ſubjects, are uſually accompanied with ſome ſerious reſolutions and partial reformations. But theſe too often are temporary and tranſient. We read of thoſe, who in their affliction ſeek God early, but whoſe goodneſs vaniſhes as a morning cloud—who in their trouble return and enquire early after God, but are not ſtedfaſt in his covenant. We often ſee ſimilar caſes. But the anointing, of which St. John ſpeaks, is a *durable* change. It is a holy temper formed and maintained in the ſoul by a divine influence accompanying the word of truth. "Whoſoever is born of God, doth not commit ſin," or yield himſelf a ſervant to it, "for his ſeed remaineth in him, and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of God."

To know whether we are born of God, we muſt enquire whether we have our fruit unto holineſs. To know whether we have received the ſpiritual anointing from God, we muſt examine whether the anointing abide in us. There may be in ſinners an alteration, which, in many reſpects, reſembles real converſion, and yet eſſentially differs from it. The reality of ſaving repentance is more ſurely known by its permanent effects, than by any diſcriminating circumſtances, which im-

mediately attend it. "If ye *continue* in my word," says our Lord, "then are ye my disciples indeed." "Let no man deceive you;" says St. John; "He that *doth* righteousness, is righteous. He that committeth sin, is of the devil." As the quality of a tree, so the character of a man, is known by the fruit.

You will observe farther; the apostle says, "Ye have no need that any man teach you; but as this same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him;" in *Christ;* or ye shall abide in it; in the *anointing;* or in the holy temper to which ye are renewed.

To understand the apostle here, we must go back to the two preceding verses. "This is the promise which he has promised us, even eternal life;" and this blessing he has promised us in Christ. The resurrection of Christ is a sensible and decisive evidence of a life to come. The immediate ground, on which we hope for this blessing, is the promise of God. But the question, which arises in the hearts of believers is, "How shall we know *our own* particular title to it? That there is eternal life for some, we doubt not; but what is the evidence on which we may appropriate the promise to ourselves?" The apostle signifies, that there is danger of deception here; for there are some who give false instructions on the subject. "These things have I written unto you, on account of them, who seduce you," and who would gain you over to their sect by delusive flatteries. "But, says he, "if the anointing, which ye have received, abide in you, ye have no need, that any man teach you, for this will teach you of all things, which ye need to know relating to the matter in question; that is, whether ye have a title to the

promiſe of eternal life. "This is truth, and is no lie." This is a ſolid and ſubſtantial kind of evidence. There is no deception in it. It is an evidence within yourſelves; and you may more ſafely depend on this, than on the opinions of men.

As the ſubject under the apoſtle's conſideration was the believer's title to eternal life, ſo the *teaching*, of which he ſpeaks, muſt relate to this ſubject.

There are two things here obſervable. Firſt, that we are never to depend on the opinions of others concerning our claim to eternal life. And ſecondly, that the anointing or ſanctification of the Spirit, is the beſt, and the only ſolid evidence of our claim; and if we have this, we have no need, that any man ſhould teach us.

Firſt. The apoſtle cautions us not to rely on the opinions of other men concerning our claim to eternal life.

Perſons under ſtrong exerciſes of religious fear, often reſort to others, and eſpecially to thoſe, whom they think to be experienced Chriſtians, for their opinion and advice, relative to their own ſpiritual ſtate. And they feel themſelves much relieved and comforted by the judgment of ſuch Chriſtians in their favour. Fear is a painful paſſion, and peculiarly ſo, when the object of it is the miſery of the world to come. In this anxious ſtate many are too eaſily flattered; and they too eaſily find ſome who are diſpoſed to flatter them. Great injury is often done to ſuch people by an officious kind of pity in haſtily pronouncing them converted. It would be much better to ſtate before them the nature of religion, the fruits of converſion, and the evidences of holineſs, and to point out to them their duty, adviſing them to ſeek the full aſſurance of hope, in the way which

the apoſtle preſcribes, by following them, who through faith and patience inherit the promiſes. Paul thought it a ſmall thing to be judged of man's judgment. He adviſes every man to prove his own work, that he may have rejoicing in himſelf, in his own experience, and not in the opinion of another. We may lay before anxious and enquiring perſons the rules, by which they are to try themſelves; but we muſt leave *them* to apply the rules. We ſhould not aſſume to be judges of their ſtate, but rather aſſiſt them to judge their own. We are to entertain a charitable hope of them, as far as there is evidence to juſtify it. But that they may confirm their own hope we muſt refer them to perſonal examination, and adviſe them to religious improvement. However ſudden converſion itſelf may be, the evidence of it to the ſubject muſt be his own experience; the evidence of it to others muſt be its viſible fruits.

The apoſtle here ſays, that he gave the inſtruction in the text, as a caution againſt certain ſeducers, who, in that day had crept into the church. As theſe ſeducers endeavoured to make diviſions, and form ſects among Chriſtians, ſo one artifice, which they uſed to gain proſelytes, was haſtily pronouncing men in a ſtate of ſafety. And this has been an artifice of impoſtors in all ages.

Every religious ſect has its own diſtinguiſhing peculiarities, either in doctrines, or forms. And an adoption of theſe peculiarities, is too often made a criterion of ſaving grace. The ſeducer, zealous to make proſelytes to his ſect, condemns all ſects but his own, as alienated from God, and expoſed to deſtruction. Thus he diſturbs the peace and ſhocks the hope of many ſerious and tender minds. If he hears of an uncommon attention to religion in any place, he will think

there is a field prepared to receive the ſeeds of diviſion, and will not fail there to beſtow his labors. Perſons agitated with fears and perplexed with doubts, are anxiouſly looking for direction and comfort. Among ſuch the impoſtor promiſes himſelf greateſt ſucceſs. Having gained them over to his ſect, he pronounces them children of God and heirs of heaven. He tells them, that all natural men are enemies, to that religion, which he teaches, and conſequently, that all who embrace the doctrines, and conform to the practices, which he inculcates, muſt be ſavingly renewed. Thus anxious minds ſee a ſhort and eaſy way to obtain the peace and hope which they are ſeeking. It is only to change their ſect, and join a new party. Such an expeditious method to gain comfort is tempting to many. They embrace the new forms and doctrines propoſed to them, not on rational conviction, but for the ſake of preſent relief. The ſure way to peace, preſcribed in the goſpel, is too ſlow and tedious for their impatient feelings. Hence they eagerly hear, and implicitly adopt the inſtructions, which cauſe to err from the words of knowledge.

Now St. John ſhows us,

Secondly, a more excellent way. He ſays, "We have no need, that any man ſhould teach us," whether we are entitled to heaven. This is a queſtion, which, after all advice, we muſt decide for ourſelves. If we have the anointing of the Spirit, this teaches us all that we need to know in relation to the matter of our enquiry.

"We are choſen to ſalvation through ſanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." This ſanctification conſiſts in a temper conformed to the character of God and the pattern of Chriſt; or in an habitual oppoſition to ſin, and love of

univerſal holineſs. It comprehends all thoſe graces and virtues, which are called the fruits of the Spirit, and which are oppoſite to the works of the fleſh. Theſe are enumerated by St. Paul in his epiſtle to the Galatians. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith, meekneſs and temperance. Againſt theſe there is no law." "There is no condemnation to them, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit." "Whatſoever things are true, honeſt, juſt, pure, lovely and of good report, think on theſe things." St. Peter, inſtructing us how we may obtain the promiſes, ſays, "that, having eſcaped the pollutions which are in the world, we muſt become partakers of a divine nature; and beſides this, giving all diligence, we muſt to our faith add fortitude, knowledge, temperance, patience, godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs and charity." St. James gives a ſimilar deſcription of the goſpel temper. "The wiſdom, which is from above, is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, eaſy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy." All theſe graces are included in that *anointing*, which, the ſcripture tells us, is the evidence of our title to eternal life. This is an evidence, becauſe to this the promiſe is expreſsly made. "The pure in heart ſhall ſee God." "To be ſpiritually minded is life and peace."

This anointing is the *earneſt* of the Spirit. It is a qualification for, and anticipation of the heavenly inheritance. As the happineſs of heaven conſiſts in ſeeing and enjoying God, ſo our preparation for heaven muſt conſiſt in that holineſs which aſſimilates us to God. And all, in whom the Spirit of God has wrought this holineſs, have a pledge and earneſt of their admiſſion to heaven.

Their heaven is in ſome meaſure begun. They have ſome ſenſible foretaſtes of it while they are on earth. The pleaſures, which reſult from the temper of religion in the heart, are of the ſame kind with thoſe, which are to be enjoyed in the world above. They are, indeed, much inferior in degree; but their nature is the ſame. And the grace of God in ſanctifying us to a meetneſs for heaven, is an evidence that he will bring us to it. His preparing us for the inheritance is our beſt proof of his gracious intention to put us in poſſeſſion of it. He who thus begins the good work, will perform it to the day of Chriſt.

The apoſtle obſerves, that this kind of evidence will not deceive us. "It is truth, and is no lie."

All other kinds of evidence are uncertain, and may be deluſive.

We cannot ſafely rely on the judgment of others in our favor; for they cannot know our hearts. Their judgment, if founded in our external conduct, muſt be uncertain; for it is but a ſmall part, and perhaps only the beſt part of our conduct, which falls under their obſervation; and that which they ſee, may proceed from motives wholly undiſcerned and unſuſpected. If we give them information concerning the ſtate of our minds, this information is too imperfect to be the ground of an infallible judgment. We may by examination gain that knowledge of ourſelves, which we cannot communicate to another. If others think and ſpeak favorably of us, yet we know not but they are blinded by friendſhip, or biaſſed by perſonal attachment; nor can we ſay, but they aim to flatter and deceive us for their own unworthy ends.

If we judge of ourſelves by a compariſon with ſome reputed Chriſtians, here again we are liable

to be deluded; for perhaps they are not in reality, ſuch good Chriſtians, as we imagine; and if they are, yet it is not eaſy to make a juſt compariſon between ourſelves and them. We ſee in them many imperfections, and hear them complain of many more, equal, we think, to any of which we are conſcious. But we know not what peculiar temptations may attend theſe Chriſtians, what deep humiliation they may feel, what ſtrict vigilance they may exerciſe, and what a pious temper and virtuous conduct they in general maintain. Their life is hidden with Chriſt in God, and but a ſmall part of it is viſible to us.

Or if we judge of our ſtate by the convictions and terrors, which we have felt at particular times, and by the comforts and joys, which have enſued; theſe perhaps were but tranſient. There may be ſenſible emotions of paſſion, which much reſemble the workings of the mind in true repentance, but fall eſſentially ſhort of that important change. If our hope reſts in any temporary experience, we may be deceived.

But the anointing, which the true believer receives, and which abides in him, the apoſtle ſays, "is truth, and is no lie." If the Chriſtian temper be formed and remain in us, we may from thence draw an evidence, which will not deceive us. True religion in the heart is not light and flighty, but ſolid and ſubſtantial. Whether we poſſeſs this religion, we muſt judge by looking within us, by comparing ourſelves with the word of God, by attending to the general tenor of our conduct, by inſpecting the motives which govern it, and by obſerving our tempers in the various changes and circumſtances of life. If we find the goſpel temper, in all its relations, operating ſteadily in us, and perceive a godly ſorrow ſpon-

taneouſly riſing from our conſcious failures in duty, and a humbleneſs of mind accompanying our known imperfections, then we have the beſt evidence, which, in the preſent ſtate, we can have, that we have paſſed from death to life. This is an evidence, which depends not on the opinion of others, but on our own experience—not on the occaſional flow of affection, but on a permanent habit of holineſs.

The apoſtle adds, " As this anointing *hath taught* you, ye ſhall abide in him," in Chriſt, " that when he ſhall appear, ye may not be aſhamed before him at his coming."

The apoſtle refers Chriſtians to their paſt experience of the power of religion. " This anointing hath heretofore taught you. Seek comfort in the way, in which ye have found it already. You have received the goſpel, and, with it, the ſanctifying influence of the Spirit. Thus you have gained additional evidence of the truth of the goſpel, and good hope of your title to eternal life. Why do you liſten to thoſe ſeducers, who would perſuade you to ſeek a confirmation of your faith and hope in another way ? Is there a more excellent way ? If the goſpel has been bleſſed of God to your ſanctification, then you know it is divine ; for its efficacy on your hearts is God's teſtimony to its truth. If you have experienced God's ſanctifying grace in your attendance on his inſtitutions, then he has owned theſe inſtitutions ; and will you forſake theſe for others, which ſeducers would ſubſtitute in their place ? Let this anointing abide, by which you have already been taught, and it will confirm what it has taught, and will teach you ſtill more and more. You may complain of painful doubts concerning your ſtate, and may long for higher comforts. But how did

you get the comforts which you have? Was it not by attending to the goſpel, and perceiving its ſanctifying influence? Then ſeek the grace of God to ſanctify you more and more. Thus your comfort will increaſe. Thus you will have confidence before Chriſt at his coming."

This is the tenor and force of the apoſtle's argument. It is ſimilar to that, which St. Paul uſes with the Galatians to convince them of their folly in turning from the grace of God unto another goſpel. "This only would I learn of you; Received ye the ſpirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye ſo fooliſh? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye made perfect in the fleſh?"

This argument may be applied to all, who under the pretence of greater comfort and better edification, forſake the adminiſtration of ordinances in the places where God has met them by his grace.

There are many Chriſtians, who really believe, that, in their regular attendance on the ordinances of divine worſhip, they have received the anointing of the Spirit; and hence they have gained a comfortable hope of their title to eternal life. But a wicked ſeducer tells them, "There are great errors among the Chriſtians with whom you aſſemble; and you will find more purity of doctrine, and more of the power of godlineſs among us." Tempted by ſuch inſinuations, they change their ſocial connexion and their place of worſhip. Were I to ſpeak with ſuch Chriſtians, on their change of relation, I ſhould ſay, "Conſult your own experience. If you ſincerely believe, that you have experienced the power of God's grace in the place, where you have ſought it, why ſhould you forſake this place to find the grace of God ſome-

where elſe? Why ſhould you contemn the very means, which you think God has owned and bleſſed to your ſanctification and conſolation? You think, as ſome in John's time thought, that you can obtain greater comfort and improvement elſewhere; and you chooſe to make the experiment; but it is a raſh and dangerous experiment. John's advice is this, "As the anointing hath taught you, abide in it. Thus when Chriſt ſhall appear, ye ſhall have confidence, and ſhall not be aſhamed before him at his coming."

We ſee the way to obtain an evidence of our title to eternal life. It is to ſeek the ſanctification of the Spirit. And this we are to ſeek by a regular attendance on the means of ſanctification, which God has provided for us. Chriſt's prayer for his diſciples was, "Sanctify them by thy truth: thy word is truth." It is by attending on the word of truth, that we may hope to receive the ſanctification of the Spirit. Chriſtians are ſaid to be "begotten by the word of truth, and born of incorruptible ſeed, even of the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

We perhaps hope, that we have received, what the apoſtle calls the anointing of the Spirit; but doubts reſt on our minds. And what ſhall we do? The apoſtle's advice is, "Abide in this anointing; in this holy life which is begun, and ſeek greater meaſures of grace. Take no other methods to diſpel your fears, and eſtabliſh your hopes." This method is the moſt ſure, and will be ſufficient. Other methods may be deceptive; this is truth and is no lie. The more you increaſe in the temper, and abound in the fruits of holineſs, the brighter will be your evidence of a title to eternal life, and the ſtronger will be your religious comforts. Whatever hopes you may obtain without

the inward work of ſanctification, they will fail you. Every kind of hope, which is different from, and unconnected with this, is vain and deluſive. But in this there is no deception. It is probable indeed that many deceive themſelves, in anſwering the queſtion, whether they are the ſubjects of this ſanctification. But the evidence itſelf is ſure. If there be an error, it ariſes not from the nature of the evidence, but from the blindneſs of the mind in applying it. Examine yourſelves then, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own ſelves; for Chriſt is in you except ye be reprobates. And if Chriſt be in you, the body is dead with regard to ſin; and the Spirit is life with regard to righteouſneſs; for to be carnally minded is death, but to be ſpiritually minded is life and peace.

We who are miniſters are taught, in what manner we ſhould treat thoſe, who apply to us for advice under ſpiritual doubts and fears. We are not to pronounce them in a converted ſtate. This is aſſuming more than the apoſtles aſſumed. John intimates that ſeducers took this method to gain proſelytes to their ſect. The apoſtles were more cautious; for they pretended to no certain knowledge of men's hearts, and they uſed no inticing and flattering words to bring men under their influence. The proper way of treating ſuch inquirers is that which our apoſtle has exemplified; we are to explain the nature of religion, ſtate the evidences of converſion, and direct men to examine their own hearts, and prove their own works. Thus we are to eſtabliſh our own hopes; thus our hearers muſt eſtabliſh theirs. It is by walking in the fear of God, that we walk in the comforts of the holy Ghoſt. It is by abounding in the fruits of

righteouſneſs, that we are to abound in the hopes of glory. It is by adding to our faith all the virtues of the Chriſtian character, that we are to make our calling and election ſure. If we do this, we ſhall never fall, but an entrance will be miniſtred to us abundantly into the kingdom of Chriſt.

SERMON XXIII.

The Death of the Young lamented and improved.

A Funeral Sermon.

JOB xiv. 19.

—— Thou deſtroyeſt the Hope of man.

HOPE is a principle, which prompts all our actions, and animates us in all the buſineſs of life. Whatever we undertake, we are influenced by the hope of ſome good to compenſate our labours. "He that ploweth, ploweth in hope; and he that threſheth, is partaker of his hope." But the hope of man, though ordinarily in ſome degree realized, is frequently diſappointed. Job obſerves, that even "mountains decay, and rocks are removed; that waters wear the ſtones and waſh away the things which grow out of the earth, and God deſtroyeth the hope of man." This obſervation is verified, not only in floods, ſtorms, and droughts, which cut off the hope of harveſt,

but in a thouſand other unexpected occurrences, which defeat our worldly deſigns. The truth of it is never more viſibly manifeſted, and more ſenſibly felt, than when hopeful youths are ſnatched out of life, juſt as their promiſing virtues and talents begin to raiſe the expectations of thoſe who know them. Such events Job ſeems to have had in view; for he adds, "Thou prevaileſt forever againſt him, and he paſſeth; thou changeſt his countenance, and ſendeſt him away."

The young are the hope of man. But this hope is often deſtroyed.

The young are the hope of man.

The human kind is continued by ſucceſſion. "One generation paſſeth away, and another cometh." The mortals now on the ſtage are ſoon to withdraw, and return no more. Were the race of men to be terminated with the preſent generation, and the earth to become a dreary waſte, as ſoon as they were gone, the proſpect before us would be covered with an impenetrable gloom; our labours would languiſh, and our enterpriſe ceaſe. But in the melancholy aſſurance of our own ſpeedy departure, our minds are comforted, and our proſpects brightened, by the expectation that another generation will ſucceed us, and ſtill another, and that the ſucceſſion will be continued for ages unknown. The youths now riſing up are our hope and joy. Theſe are ſoon to fill our places, enter on our labours, take the benefit of our improvements, and add to them improvements of their own, which the ſhortneſs of our time will not permit us to make. We ſeem to ourſelves, as if we ſhould live in them after we are dead.

The riſing generation is an eſſential link in the long chain of human ſucceſſion. As we have been the inſtruments of bringing them into exiſtence,

ſo they, in their turn, will be the inſtruments of bringing forward another generation, and theſe again of another; and thus the ſucceſſion is to be maintained, until that diſtant period, when the earth itſelf ſhall paſs away.

The young are the hope of *ſociety*. They are ſoon to ſtand in our lot; to poſſeſs our property; to take up our duties; to ſuſtain our offices; to enjoy our privileges, and hand them forward to the mortals, who will ſucceed them.

We value the *goſpel*, which, by the piety of our fathers, has been tranſmitted to us. We view it as a moſt precious gift of God to fallen men. We know it to be the great charter of our eternal hopes. What it is to us, the ſame muſt it be to all who come after us. Could we believe, that they who ſhall live here ſome centuries hence, would be ſtrangers to divine revelation; in this ſad anticipation, we ſhould lament their unhappy fate, and think it would be good for them not to be born. But we look on the youth now advancing forward, and hope, that by their means this richeſt of all bleſſings will be tranſmitted to diſtant ages. We reſolve to commit it to them, to educate them in the knowledge of it and inculcate upon them its ſacred importance. We hope, that they, in their turn, will do the ſame, when a new generation ſhall follow them, and that thus remote ages will be pious and happy by the virtue and fidelity of the youths, who are now growing up under our care.

Some of us feel *old age* invading them; others ſee it advancing toward them. We realize, that ſoon we ſhall be taken off from the active labours of life, and placed in a helpleſs and dependent condition. In the forethought of this evil day, we have comfort in our children, who, we think,

will naturally care for us, nouriſh our feeble age, ſuſtain our trembling frame, and requite the kindneſs we have ſhewn to them. "As arrows in the hands of the mighty, ſo are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them. They ſhall not be aſhamed, but ſhall ſpeak with the enemies in the gate."

There are ſome youths, of whom it may be ſaid with *ſpecial* propriety, "They are the hope of man."

When we ſee young men of promiſing abilities, aſpiring geniuſes, and virtuous habits, coming forward into life, it is natural and juſt to hope, they will be bleſſings in ſociety and in all their relations. We pleaſe ourſelves with the expectation, that they will do much good in their day; will promote the intereſt of virtue and religion within their ſphere; advance the honour and happineſs of the families to which they belong; and, if they ſhould ſtand at the head of families, the young, under their care, will be trained up to piety and uſefulneſs; and thus innumerable bleſſings will deſcend to thoſe, who ſhall hereafter be born.

As the young, in general, ſo the *virtuous* young in particular, are the hope of man. But this hope, as Job obſerves, is often deſtroyed. The premature deaths of promiſing youths diſappoint our flattering expectations. Inſtances of this kind are recorded in ſcripture, and ſtill occur in the courſe of providence.

But why muſt it be ſo?—Why may not our innocent hopes be realized?—Why may not pious and promiſing youths be ſpared for a comfort to their friends and a bleſſing to the world?—"God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. As the heavens are above the earth, ſo are his thoughts and ways above ours."

There are reaſons, however, which we may perceive, ſufficient to juſtify theſe diſpenſations, or, at leaſt, to ſilence our complaints.

God is ſovereign. All creatures are his, and he has a right to do what he will with his own. "He taketh away, and who can hinder him? Who ſhall ſay to him, What doeſt thou?"

God has appointed all men to death. The appointment is juſt, for all have ſinned. He has ſent his Son to redeem us from the miſery of the world to come; but the ſentence of death remains, as a ſtanding teſtimony of his diſpleaſure againſt ſin, and a ſtanding admonition to lay hold on eternal life. Our acceptance of the purchaſed ſalvation does not exempt us from natural death. By the death of Jeſus a future life is procured; by our own death we muſt paſs to the enjoyment of it.

The wiſdom of God has ſubjected our mortal race to great variety in the time and manner of their death, that all might ſee the neceſſity of early preparation for it. If none died, but in old age, none would expect to die, and few would prepare to die, at an earlier period; and by long indulgence, men would generally become hardened in their wickedneſs. It is for their general benefit, that there ſhould be all the variety, which we ſee, in the circumſtances of their death, that all, admoniſhed of their danger, might be always ready.

God deſtroys the hope of man, that man may place his hope in God. When we ſee promiſing appearances in the young, eſpecially in our own children, it is natural to entertain pleaſing expectations; but often theſe expectations riſe too high. They need a rebuke. The death of a hopeful youth is a warning to parents, and to all, not to look for comfort in earthly things, but to ſeek

happineſs in God. This is the language in which it ſpeaks, "Truſt not in man, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of? But truſt in the Lord forever, for with him is everlaſting ſtrength." We never ſhall enjoy ourſelves in this world, until we learn to look beyond it. All things here are uncertain; and the more confidently we rely upon them, the more frequent and painful will be our diſappointments. God is allſufficient and unchanging: his promiſes are ſure and faithful; he is always near to us; he is a very preſent help in trouble; his favour is life. When we devote ourſelves to him, place our confidence in him, commit our intereſts into his hands, and reſign all our concerns to his diſpoſal, then we beſt enjoy our earthly bleſſings, and then only we enjoy him.

The death of a pious youth, though it ſeem a loſs to us and to the world, yet by the grace of God may prove a great and extenſive benefit. We think, that if ſuch a youth might live, his example and converſation would have a happy influence on many around him. But who knows what influence his death may have? When the young, who were his aſſociates, ſee how religion ſupported him in the diſtreſſes of ſickneſs, and comforted him in the proſpect of eternity; when they hear his dying exhortations to early piety, and his ſolemn cautions againſt neglecting the care of their ſouls, perhaps ſome of them will receive uſeful and laſting impreſſions. Perhaps his death, and his dying example and advice may do more to convince them of the truth and importance of religion, and to awaken their attention to it, than all that he could ſay and do in many years of health. Who knows, but ſome, brought by his death to embrace and exemplify religion, may do all the

good in their life which we hoped from him? Who knows, but the important end, which we wiſhed might be accompliſhed by his means, will be accompliſhed by means which God ſees to be more effectual?

The pious youth may be taken away from evil to come. Man is born to trouble. This attends him in every ſtage of his progreſs through the world; death awaits him; from this there is no diſcharge. The world is full of temptations; the young Chriſtian, while he lives in it, has many dangers to meet, and many conflicts to endure. Early death places him in a happy ſecurity from all the evils, which attend the ſaints who ſurvive him. Had he lived to a greater age, he might have attained to higher glory. But he now attains to his proper meaſure of glory with greater facility and with a ſhorter probation.

To the godly there are advantages reſulting from long life; and there are advantages reſulting from early death. God knows how to order the time and manner of every one's removal. To the true believer life will not be too long, nor death too ſoon. Whether life, or death, both are his.

In the calm death of a religious youth, it appears, what religion can do. Hence parents may learn how to find comfort in the death of their children.

In the death of the young the greateſt conſolation of a parent is a conſciouſneſs of his fidelity in their education, and a perſuaſion that his labour has not been in vain. To part with a child is a great affliction. If this child be driven away in his wickedneſs and with terrors of conſcious guilt, the affliction is inexpreſſibly aggravated. But, on the contrary, it is greatly ſoftened and mitigated by obſerving his hope in death, and by reflecting

that his virtuous life has accorded with his dying hope.

If in the review of our own conduct we can say, we have faithfully discharged our parental obligations; and in the retrospect on a child's behaviour, we can say, he has been observant of our instructions and obedient to our counsels, has conducted with sobriety and discretion, and appeared to make his duty his rule of action; if in the distresses of sickness we see him patient and resigned; and in the near expectation of death, hear him committing his soul to God with expressions of humble hope; we feel a refreshment, which makes us almost forget our sorrow.

Such an example teaches all parents, how to provide themselves with means of consolation against similar trials. They well know, that they are liable to afflictions of this kind. There is not a parent, but who, in his children's death, ardently desires consolation. There is no consolation equal to the hope, that their death is their gain. Let every parent then train up his children in religious sentiments and virtuous manners, and exhort them to, and assist them in a timely preparation for death and eternity, that if they be early called away, he may have hope for them, and they may have hope for themselves. If it be a comfort to us to see the friends, who go before us, depart in peace, it will be a comfort to the friends who survive us, to see us depart in the same manner. Let us then leave to them the consolation, which we esteem so valuable for ourselves.

The observations, which we have made, come to us strongly enforced by the providence of the week past.

We have seen a youth of promising abilities and hopeful virtues taken from his affectionate pa-

rents and brethren, by a caſualty ſudden in its attack, and fatal, though ſlow, in its effect. We have ſeen his friends anxiouſly watching the ſymptoms of his malady, and ſuſpended in anguiſh for days together between hope and deſpair. We have ſeen the youth enduring his uncommon diſtreſs with calm ſubmiſſion, and meeting his death with ſerene hope. We have ſeen the painful diſappointment, which they ſuffered in his early death, and the conſolation, which they derived from his virtuous life and dying reſignation. We have ſeen, in this affecting caſe, a proof of the value of religion, and of the importance of embracing it in early life.

As he, juſt before his death, addreſſed the young, who ſtood around his bed, and urged their pious improvement of the caſualty which had befallen him, and of the death which threatened him; I cannot forbear to ſecond his addreſs in a more public manner, than he had opportunity to make it.

Conceive, then, my youthful hearers, that you ſtood by his bedſide, and heard him ſpeak to you in the following manner; "You ſee, my friends, the ſituation that I am in. A few days ago I was in health like you. By a ſudden accident I am confined to my bed, and probably ſhall ſoon be laid in my grave. None of you knows how ſoon his condition may be like mine. You ſee in me the neceſſity of being early prepared for death. I adviſe you to think ſeriouſly of the uncertainty of life, and to prepare diligently for its end. Delay not ſuch a work any longer: no; not for one ſingle hour. You may as well attend to it now, as at a future time. Make it a preſent buſineſs. I particularly adviſe you to reverence the ſabbath and the houſe of God. There are ſome young people,

who, on the ſabbath, are too vain in their talk, and in the time of worſhip are too light in their appearance. I have obſerved theſe evils with grief of heart. I beſeech you to avoid them; for they will cauſe you to mourn at the laſt, when your fleſh and your body are conſumed. Never uſe profane language. This is a ſin, which young people too often practiſe, but for which they muſt give an account. God will not hold them guiltleſs, who take his name in vain. Treat your parents and all elderly people with reſpect. Aſk counſel and inſtruction from them, that you may grow in wiſdom. Read the ſcriptures daily, that you may learn your duty and the way of ſalvation. Get an acquaintance with yourſelves, that you may ſee your need of a Saviour; get an acquaintance with your Saviour, that you may ſee how ſafe it is to truſt him. Go to Chriſt that you may have life. You are dependent on the grace of God; but you muſt ſeek, in order to obtain it. Seek unto God betimes. Seek him in the time when he may be found. This is the time. You can be ſure of no other. You think religion is important to me, becauſe I am ſoon to die. It is as important to you, as it is to me; for you are as mortal as I am, though perhaps you are not to die quite ſo ſoon as I ſhall. Whenever you die, you will need its comforts, as much as I do now. Therefore ſecure them immediately. I am weak and faint; I cannot ſay much.....I beg you to remember the little I can ſay.....I fear you will ſoon forget it. I ſee you in tears; but you will not always feel as you do now, while you look on my dying body and hear my feeble voice.....That you may call my advice to mind and awaken the reſolutions, which you now feel, go ſometimes to the place where my body will ſoon be laid, and

look on the clods which will cover it.....There recollect what I have ſaid, how you felt, and what you reſolved. Your bodies may ſoon be laid by mine.....May our ſouls meet in that world, where is no more pain nor death."

Such, in ſubſtance, were the counſels and exhortations which the youth, lately deceaſed, gave to ſome of you, on the laſt Lord's day. My information was not full, for the recollection of thoſe who gave it me, was imperfect. But he ſpake in this manner; and probably ſome of you remember more than I have repeated. What he ſpake was deeply felt. It was heard with flowing tears. You who heard it, I believe, realized its importance, and reſolved to regard it. Abide by that reſolution.

His advice was impreſſed by his dying condition; it is recommended by his former good example; it is ſealed by his death. What can be ſaid to enforce it?

There was ſomething in the cloſe of his addreſs, which ſtruck my mind very powerfully. He adviſed you, now and then, to viſit his grave, that you might remember his dying exhortation. This is ſo ſimilar to the counſel of the dying Saviour, that I think it muſt affect you deeply.

The Saviour, when he was on earth, ſpent much of his time in giving religious inſtructions to as many as would hear him. He often gave inſtructions to the young. When the time of his death drew near, his inſtructions were more frequent and affectionate; and he urged them by the ſolemn and impreſſive circumſtance of his approaching death. He well knew, that good inſtructions were eaſily forgotten; he therefore recommended the frequent remembrance of his death, as a mean to impreſs his words more deeply and indelibly on

the heart. The place of his burial could not be viſited by his diſciples in all ages and parts of the world. And if it could, his body would not be there, for it was ſoon to riſe. He therefore inſtituted a particular ordinance as a repreſentation and memorial of his death, and commanded, that this ſhould be obſerved in remembrance of him, and thus his death ſhewn forth, until he ſhall come again. The reaſon why he appointed the ordinance, and injoined the obſervance of it was, that we might remember him and the words which he ſpake; and might remember his death and the benefits which it procured.

Now, my young friends, you doubtleſs think, that the youth who adviſed you to viſit his grave, that you might better remember his inſtructions, gave you judicious advice. I believe you intend to regard it. And will you not regard the command of your Saviour, who has required you to come to the place, where he is ſet forth as crucified for you, and there to awaken the recollection of his inſtructions, and a reſolution to obſerve them? Your attention to this young man's counſel is expedient; your obedience to the Saviour's command is indiſpenſable.

My children; You have had a ſolemn call from God to make religion your early choice, and your ſouls your early care. Obey it, and be happy. You know not but that the next call may be one, which will conſign you to the grave.

You ſometimes, perhaps, hear vain people talk lightly of religion—of the bible—of the Saviour—of divine worſhip. Liſten to no ſuch vain talkers and deceivers. Their inſtructions will cauſe you to err from the words of knowledge. Nothing will comfort you on a death bed, but the religion taught in the bible. That you may feel

its comforts then, embrace it now. "Think on your ways, and turn your feet into God's teſtimonies. Make haſte and delay not to keep his commandments." Examine your hearts and try your ways. Under a ſenſe of guilt, repair to the Saviour, who came to redeem them who are loſt. In his name commit your ſouls to the mercy of God and devote your lives to his ſervice, relying on the grace of the holy Spirit, which he gives to them who aſk him. Watch againſt ſin; ſhun the places of temptation; depart from evil doers; chooſe for your companions thoſe who fear God; ſanctify God's ſabbath; attend at his ſanctuary; reverence his word; ſubſcribe with your hands to the Lord; dedicate yourſelves to him in ſecret; make known your vows in the preſence of his people; come to the Redeemer's table; there remember what he has taught you and ſuffered for you, and what obligations you are under to him; and thus enliven your affections to him, and your reſolutions for him. Let the event, which you have ſeen, and the counſel which you have heard, be followed with ſuch happy effects, as ſhall make it manifeſt, that God has not ſpoken to you in vain.

You, who are parents and have children under your care, are reminded of the duty which you owe them. You ſee how uncertain are their lives. You hope for their continuance with you while you live, and their kind offices to you when you ſhall be old. But your hope may be blaſted by their untimely death. In ſuch a painful, and not improbable trial there can be no greater comfort, than a belief that they have walked in the truth, and died in ſafety. That you may have this comfort, inſtruct, direct and aſſiſt them in the religious life. You are ſolicitous to provide for

them an earthly inheritance, and to prepare them for the enjoyment of it. This is not a fault. But perhaps they will never need the inheritance, nor have opportunity to poſſeſs it. Point their views, and direct your own to a heavenly inheritance. This is of infinite value, and may be made perfectly ſure. Death will not deprive them of it, but bring them to it. It is only impenitence in ſin, which can exclude them. Teach them the nature and danger of ſin, and the way of deliverance through ſanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Call their attention to the care of their ſouls; encourage their application to the great Redeemer; guard them againſt ſeduction into the way of the ungodly; lead them in the path of righteouſneſs; direct their attendance on the ſolemnities of the ſanctuary; aſſiſt their preparation for communion at the Lord's table; go before them in the way, in which you adviſe them to walk. There is reaſon to believe, that God will bleſs your faithful labours for their benefit. You ſee that he ſucceeds your worldly diligence and prudence; you have more reaſon to expect, that equal diligence and prudence in promoting their ſpiritual intereſt will be ſucceſsful. You may apply what God ſays of Abraham; "I know him, that he will command his children and his houſehold after him; and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord."

The wiſdom of your children will give joy to your ſouls. If God, in his ſovereign providence, ſhould remove them from you by an early death, your ſorrow will be aſſuaged, and your ſouls refreſhed by the peace and hope, which they will enjoy, in conſequence of your parental fidelity. "Holy God, turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the

fathers, that they may be mutual bleſſings in this world, and may rejoice together in the day of the Lord. Pour down thy Spirit upon us, and thy bleſſing upon our ſeed. Satisfy us now with thy mercy, that we may be glad and rejoice all our remaining days. Let thy work appear unto us, and thy glory to our children. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, eſtabliſh the work of our hands, and bleſs us with thy ſalvation."

SERMON XXIV.

Ezekiel's affliction in the Death of his Wife, and his Behaviour under it.

A Funeral Sermon.

EZEKIEL xxiv. 18.

So I ſpake to the people in the morning, and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning, as I was commanded.

AT the time, when Ezekiel's wife died, the deſtruction of the land of Iſrael by the Chaldeans was near at hand. In the affliction which befel him, and in his behaviour under it, he was a ſign to the people. The word of the Lord came to him, ſaying, "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the deſire of thine eyes with a ſtroke." The deſire of his eyes was his *wife;* for he ſays in our text, "At evening my *wife* died." She died *ſuddenly*, within a few hours after he was premoniſhed of the event. She was taken away with a *ſtroke.*

The order which follows is ſingular. "Thou

ſhalt not mourn nor weep, neither ſhall tears run down." This cannot be intended to forbid, either in him or in others, the natural ſenſations of grief; for theſe, in ſuch an affliction, are unavoidable. Neither our feelings nor our tears are always at our own command. To be incapable of grief for the death of a friend, would not be reaſon and virtue, but hardneſs and ſtupidity. The words rather import, that the ſtroke would be ſo ſudden and ſevere, as to amaze and confound him; that it would lock up the avenues of tears, and deny the relief which nature affords in more moderate afflictions.

In this reſpect he was to the Jews a ſign of the dreadful calamity impending, under which they ſhould not mourn nor weep, but pine away in their grief.

The prophet is next forbidden to uſe the common badges and tokens of mourning; and thus to ſignify to his people, that, in the deſtruction of their city, they would be in no condition to uſe the ceremonies and wear the dreſs of ſorrow, common on other occaſions; but would flee, or be driven before their enemies, in ſuch habits as could be haſtily aſſumed. "Be thou ſilent, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put thy ſhoes on thy feet, cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men." Partake not of the mourning feaſts, which cuſtom preſcribes on funeral occaſions.

"So I ſpake to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died; and in the morning," following her death, "I did as I was commanded." "And the people ſaid unto me, tell us, what the things, which thou doeſt, are to us. I anſwered them, Thus ſaith the Lord, I will profane my ſanctuary, the excellency of your ſtrength and the

deſire of your eyes, and that which your ſoul pitieth ; and your ſons and your daughters ſhall be ſlain by the ſword ; and ye ſhall do as I have done. Ye ſhall not cover your lips," in token of mourning, " nor eat the bread of men. Ye ſhall not mourn nor weep, but ſhall pine away in your iniquities."

The words of our text, taken in their connexion, ſuggeſt to us the following thoughts :

That the death of a wife is a moſt painful affliction—That under an affliction of this kind careful attention muſt be paid to the commands of God—That in ſuch an event, others are concerned, as well as the immediate ſufferer.

I. The death of a wife is here repreſented, as one of the moſt painful afflictions incident to mortals.

Ezekiel's wife is called " the deſire of his eyes." And his affliction in her death was to the Jews a ſign of their approaching diſtreſs in the deſtruction of their cities and the depopulation of their country, in which general calamity each one's ſhare would perhaps little exceed the anguiſh of a huſband in the death of his partner.

The happineſs of human life greatly depends on ſociety and friendſhip. None of the ſocial connexions are ſo intimate and affectionate, ſo ſtrong and intereſting, as the conjugal connexion. This is founded in love, cemented by reciprocal offices of kindneſs, ſtrengthened by a community of intereſt, eſpecially by a common relation to, and concern in the dependent members of the family. The diſſolution of this connexion breaks one of the cloſeſt ſocial ties, and croſſes one of the ſtrongeſt affections of humanity. It places the ſurviver in a lonely condition, and involves him in new and unexperienced cares. His affliction is

increaſed by the ſorrow which he feels for his children, perhaps for a helpleſs offspring, deprived of a parent, and unable to realize their loſs. Hence their loſs is more ſenſibly realized by him. In other afflictions he could find one to take an equal ſhare with him. But this he muſt bear alone without a partner to divide it with him. This ſpreads a gloom over the face of nature, and darkens all his worldly proſpects. Every new care, which meets him, reminds him of his loſs, and calls up his ſorrows afreſh. The objects, which once gave him pleaſure, look as if they could pleaſe no more; the buſineſs, which formerly he purſued with cheerfulneſs, becomes a burden, becauſe the one, who was wont to participate in his joys, is gone.

This affliction is, in ſcripture, placed among the moſt painful adverſities incident to our mortal ſtate. They who have experienced it acknowledge the repreſentation to be juſt.

The trial is more overwhelming, when it comes *ſuddenly*. In the prophet's caſe, it was an aggravating circumſtance, that the deſire of his eyes was taken away with a *ſtroke*, and within a few hours after the firſt apprehenſion of danger.

To a godly perſon a ſudden death is as ſafe as a lingering one. But to ſurviving friends it is more diſtreſſing, becauſe it finds them unprepared for it. The expectation of ſuch an event gradually puts the mind in an attitude to meet it. Though perhaps a long ſuſpenſion between hope and fear may give equal pain on the whole, yet at no moment is the anguiſh ſo keen, as when the ſtroke falls ſuddenly. The mind, like the body, can ſuſtain a heavier burden laid on by gentle degrees, and ſlowly increaſed, than if it fall with its full weight at once. In the former caſe, we brace

ourſelves for the weight which we have to bear, and accommodate our poſture to our approaching ſituation. In the latter caſe, we have no time to collect our ſtrength and aſſume a poſition for the ſtroke which is inviſibly deſcending.

The ſudden death of a friend breaks our purpoſes, diſappoints our expectations and cuts off our proſpects. In other caſes we gradually relinquiſh them, and give them up with a ſedate and placid mind.

But we are taught,

II. That whatever may be our affliction, and in what manner ſoever it may come, we are to regard the intimations of the divine will.

When the prophet's wife died, "he did as he was commanded." There was ſomething peculiar in the command given to him; but his obedience is a pattern for all.

1. The firſt duty required, in this and all other afflictions, is reſignation to the providence of God.

The command to the prophet was, "Thou ſhalt forbear to cry," or "thou ſhalt be ſilent." And the reaſon of the command was, "Behold, *I* take away the deſire of thine eyes." He was to be dumb and not open his mouth, becauſe it was *God* who did it. And who ſhall dare to reply againſt God?

We ought, as men, to be ſenſible of, and affected with the ſtrokes of the divine hand; but, as Chriſtians, we muſt forbear to murmur and complain under them. The exhortation, which ſpeaks to us, as to children, is this, "Deſpiſe not the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when ye are rebuked of him." To deſpiſe affliction is ſtupidity; to faint under it is weakneſs; to murmur againſt it is impiety.

That our complaints may be ſilenced, and our

ſpirits compoſed, we muſt conſider the wiſdom, juſtice, goodneſs and ſovereignty of God. "The potſherds ſtrive with the potſherds of the earth; but wo to him that ſtriveth with his Maker. Shall the clay ſay to him that faſhioned it, What makeſt thou? Or his work, He hath no hands?" "God has a right to do what he will with his own. He taketh away; and who ſhall hinder him? Who ſhall ſay to him, What doeſt thou?" He will do wrong to none. He will lay upon none more than is meet. To them who love him he will cauſe all things to work for good. In all the corrections which he inflicts on his children he has merciful ends. "He chaſtens them for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holineſs." His grace is ſufficient for their ſupport. In the day of trouble he will hear them.

In the loſs of friends we ſhould conſider the mercy of God in giving them to us at firſt, in continuing them with us ſo long, and in making them inſtruments of our comfort while we enjoyed them. The ſtroke which ſeparates a dear friend from our boſom, is painful. But can we ſay, our having had ſuch a friend, though but for a ſhort time, has been a calamity? Was not the connexion, while it laſted, a real bleſſing? Did it not contribute much to our happineſs—to our worldly proſperity—to our daily content and cheerfulneſs—to our virtue and piety—to our diſcreet behaviour and fair reputation? And if the connexion be broken, are we not even now in a more eligible condition, than if it had never been formed? We have, then, received good at the hand of God, and ſhall we not receive evil? Yea, with all the evil which attends us, have we not, on the whole, received good?

We ſhould conſider our *deſert* of affliction.

Death entered into the world by ſin. The death of a friend reminds us of our fallen and guilty ſtate, and urges us to flee from the wrath to come. Conſcious of our guilt, we ſhall ſee the juſtice of God in all the calamities of life. "Why ſhould a living man complain; a man for the puniſhment of his ſins?"

2. In affliction we are commanded to "ſearch and try our ways, and turn to the Lord."

When a friend, eſpecially a companion, is taken from us, our thoughts follow him to the other world. We chooſe to entertain the pleaſing hope, that he is gone to reſt. To ſtrengthen our hope, we recollect his amiable virtues and uſeful works, and all the indications of piety, which appeared in his life. A ſuſpicion, that he has exchanged this life for a ſtate of miſery, would be the moſt diſtreſſing part of our affliction. But if future happineſs be important to the dead, it is important to the living; for the living will ſoon be among the dead. A death in our family ſhould call our thoughts home to ourſelves. The ſtate of the dead we cannot alter; but we may do ſomething to alter our own ſtate; for our probation ſtill continues. It is ſtill a day of ſalvation. What if *we* had been removed? Should we have left to our friends the ſame conſolation, as ſome, who have gone before us, have left to us? Or if we were now to be called away, could we depart with the ſame ſerenity and comfort, as we have ſeen in ſome of our friends, when they took leave of us and of the world? They by their example and converſation have yielded us much aſſiſtance to prepare for heaven. Have our converſation and example been as highly beneficial to them? Have we done our part with them as fellow helpers to the kingdom of God? We have ſeen a

friend removed ſuddenly. It is a juſt enquiry, whether we are ready to depart on as ſhort a warning. Is the temper of heaven formed in our hearts? Is religion our daily work? If our Lord ſhould come ſuddenly, would he find us doing his will? Or rather, would he not find us ſleeping? Theſe are enquiries, to which the ſudden death of a friend loudly calls us.

3. Prayer is a duty incumbent on us at all times, and is urged with particular force by affliction; eſpecially by an affliction like this, which we are now conſidering. "Is any afflicted? Let him pray." "Let him call upon God in the day of trouble."

The death of a friend reminds us of our weakneſs, our wants, and our dependence. We cannot reſcue our deareſt companion from the grave. We cannot arreſt the hand of death, when it is ſtretched out againſt one whom we call the deſire of our heart, and on whom our happineſs in life principally depends. Nor can our friends preſerve *us*, when the number of our months is finiſhed. Nor ſhall we ourſelves have power over our own ſpirit to retain it in the day of death. What an impotent creature is man? All our dependence is on God; all our hope is in him. Should we not live near to his throne; and daily ſpread our requeſts before him? He can ſupply all our wants, and do more than we aſk or think.

Affliction gives a diſpoſition to prayer; it ſoftens the heart to the impreſſion of divine truth; it awakens the attention to another world, and makes it ſeem more real; it teaches us that all our comforts muſt come from above; it furniſhes us with matter for prayer, and enlarges the heart in this duty; it encourages a hope of acceptance, for God has made ſpecial promiſes of his gracious at-

tention to the prayers of the afflicted. If we feel a ſpirit of prayer awakened by affliction, this is a hopeful token of God's favour; for thus far affliction anſwers its purpoſe.

4. The death of a friend is an admonition from God, to withdraw our hearts from the world.

What is the world now to him who has left it? What will it be to us, a few days hence, when we ſhall have left it? Juſt the ſame, as it is now to him. "We brought nothing into the world; and we ſhall carry nothing out of it. Naked ſhall we depart to go as we came." The removal of our friend has extinguiſhed more than half of the joys of life. It has ſpread a gloom over the world's brighteſt ſcenes. Every earthly object is as uncertain, as was the one which we have loſt. Shall we ſet our hearts on things ſo precarious?—on things which ſo ſoon may leave us, or loſe their power to pleaſe us? Let us look for ſome more ſubſtantial and permanent good. Let us chooſe for our portion the favour of the allſufficient God. There is nothing on earth to be compared with this. It is better than the life of a friend; it is better than our own life. When fleſh and heart fail, this may be our ſtrength and portion forever. Let our affection and converſation be in heaven. There is our God and our Redeemer; there are holy angels and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect; there are the godly friends, who have died before us, and thither will come the pious ſouls, who ſhall leave this world after us. If our friends had continued on earth for the preſent, we could not have enjoyed them long, for we are ſtrangers here, and there is no abiding. If we meet them in heaven, we ſhall be parted from them no more. They were amiable here; they will be more amiable there. We here ſaw in them ſome imperfec-

tions, and felt more in ourſelves; there we ſhall ſee in them nothing to offend us, and ſhall ſhew nothing to offend them. The connexion here was intimate; but the beſt part of it was that which aroſe from ſimilarity of tempers and affections. The friendſhip of heaven will be wholly of this ſacred kind; it will therefore be perfect, uninterrupted and permanent.

5. The death of a friend urges upon us religion in all its various duties; for it ſolemnly teaches us the neceſſity of religion to our comfort in life, hope in death, and happineſs in eternity.

If ſuch an affliction have its proper influence, we ſhall commune with God in our cloſets, worſhip him in our families, converſe daily with his word, educate our children in his ſervice, honor his name before men, compaſſionate the afflicted, contribute in our places to advance the intereſt of the goſpel, and aſſiſt our fellow mortals in their preparation for death and the future world.

Thus we ſhould endeavor to make our own affliction a benefit to thoſe around us. Then may we hope, it will do them good, when we make it manifeſt, that it has done good to us.

III. This introduces our *third* obſervation, That any affliction, which befalls men, eſpecially the death of the head of a family, calls for the attention of all around, as well as of the immediate ſufferers.

The death of the prophet's wife was appointed, in providence, to be a ſign to the people in general, as well as an admonition to him. They were commanded to do the ſame things, which were required of him. The event was a warning to them of impending calamities; the prophet's behaviour was a pattern to them of their duty under thoſe calamities.

When we ſee a neighbor deprived of the deſire of his eyes by a ſtroke, and left with the care of a family, who needed her nurturing and guiding hand, we feel a tender compaſſion for him and them; we give him ſome condoling words; we wiſh him divine conſolation and direction; we hope he will be wiſe. We obſerve his ſubſequent behaviour, to judge whether he derives any religious advantage from his painful affliction. If we ſee him grave, ſerious and heavenly-minded, we rejoice in his wiſe improvement of the ſolemn admonition. But if we ſhould ſee him quite the reverſe, we ſhould cenſure his inattention to the voice of God, and ſhould wonder, that he could ſo ſoon forget ſo loud a warning—ſo ſoon forget his firſt feelings and reſolutions.

But let us remember, that our afflicted neighbor is a *ſign* to *us;* that the voice, which ſpeaks to him, ſpeaks to *us;* that the ſerious attention, which becomes him, becomes *us;* that the improvement, which ought to be made of the affliction by him, ought to be made by *us;* that *we* have no more right, than he, to diſregard ſuch a warning. The ſame view of the vanity of the world and of the uncertainty of life; the ſame piety and prayerfulneſs; the ſame ſelf-examination and ſerioufneſs; the ſame diligence in preparing for death, cultivating religion in the heart and promoting it in ſociety; the ſame prudence and fidelity in family education, which we would recommend to him, or which we expect from him, are, by the ſame providence, urged upon *us all.* In his caſe, we ſee that *our* friends are mortal, *our* connexions uncertain, *our* families appointed to change. The time is at hand, with reſpect to us all, when a cloud will be ſpread over our houſes by the hand of death; when ſome will

mourn the loſs of thoſe, who go before them, and when theſe who are left, will follow thoſe who are gone. In reſpect of mortality, there is nothing peculiar to one family or another. Every change, which we ſee, is an admonition to us all. And if thoughtleſsneſs would be criminal in the family, in which a change took place the laſt week, it is alſo criminal in the families, in which a ſimilar change may take place this week.

As a common expreſſion of condolence to the afflicted, we ſay, "We wiſh their affliction may be ſanctified to them." But we ought to make the ſame uſe of it ourſelves, which our benevolence wiſhes them to make. We pray for them, that they may be guided in the path of duty. If our prayer be ſincere, we ſhall walk in the ſame path, in which, we think, they ought to walk. Can we really pray, that they ſhould walk in it, when *we* turn from it? Our very prayers for the afflicted at a funeral, and in the houſe of God, reprove our neglect of religion, and our inattention to the daily warnings of providence. The cenſures, which we beſtow on ſome, who make light of their own afflictions, fall back on ourſelves, when the ſame afflictions are unimproved by us.

We live in a mortal world; we often ſee changes and deaths; the providence of God, in various ways, is renewing and repeating its admonitions, ſome of which are more painful than others; but all equally plain and intelligible. Let us hear and obey the exhortation, which ſpeaks to us, "What your hands find to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor wiſdom, nor device in the grave, to which you are going."

SERMON XXV.

The Univerſal Obligation of Religion.

II. KINGS xvii. 40, 41.

Howbeit, they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner. So theſe nations feared the Lord and ſerved their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, ſo did they unto this day.

AFTER the king of Aſſyria had conquered the kingdom of Iſrael, and had carried away captive the greater part of the inhabitants, he repeopled the country by colonies ſent from his own empire. Theſe new inhabitants were idolaters. They worſhipped their own deities, who, they imagined, had given them the country, and againſt whom, they ſuppoſed, Jehovah, the God of the land, had not power to defend it. As the country, after they were ſettled in it, was much infeſted with lions, they began to conceive more exalted thoughts of the God of Iſrael. They apprehended, that he might have ſome power in the country over which he preſided, and that, to keep at good terms with him, it might be beſt to obſerve the particular ceremonies which he was pleaſed with, but which, at preſent, they did not un-

derſtand. They therefore ſent to the king of Aſſyria an account of the trouble they met with, and of the probable cauſe of it. They ſaid, "The nations which thou haſt removed and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land; therefore he hath ſent lions among them; and behold they ſlay them, becauſe they know not the manner of the God of the land." They imagined Jehovah to be a divinity of the ſame kind with their own, a local God, who preſided only in a particular country, and who muſt be honored with certain peculiar rites, in which they had not been inſtructed. The *Syrians* had the ſame idea. When they had been defeated in an engagement with the Iſraelites, they accounted for the diſaſter by the local power of the gods of Iſrael. "Their gods are gods of the hills, therefore they are ſtronger than we: but let us fight againſt them in the plain, and ſurely we ſhall be ſtronger than they."

Upon information of the diſturbance, which the new inhabitants of Samaria ſuffered from the lions, the king of Aſſyria ordered, that one of the captive prieſts ſhould return back to reſide in Samaria, and teach theſe people the manner of the God of the land. Accordingly a prieſt was ſent, who dwelt among them, and taught them, "how they ſhould fear the Lord,"—or how they ſhould ſerve and worſhip the true God. But the prieſt was not able to bring them off from their attachment to their own deities and forms of worſhip. The moſt he could do was to introduce the worſhip of Jehovah in conjunction with idolatry. "Every nation," the people of every province in Aſſyria, who had been tranſplanted to Samaria, "made gods of their own. They feared the Lord

and ſerved their own gods, and worſhipped their graven images." They only admitted Jehovah into the number of their former divinities, and gave a ſhare of their worſhip to him among the reſt. They worſhipped him in Samaria, becauſe they ſuppoſed him to be the God of that country; but, at the ſame time, they ſerved their own deities, who, they ſuppoſed, had given them the conqueſt of the country. Thus they formed a motley religion, partly rational and true; partly idolatrous and abſurd.

In this reſpect the new inhabitants reſembled the former ones, who had been carried from thence to Aſſyria. For *they* feared not the Lord, and him *only;* but, in contempt of the expreſs law of their religion, which forbad the worſhip of other gods, they worſhipped the calves of Jeroboam, and other idols introduced in ſucceeding reigns; for which corruption they were given up to the power of their enemies. Thus had God inſtructed them; "The covenant which I made with you ye ſhall not forget, neither ſhall ye fear other gods; but the Lord your God ye ſhall fear; ſo ſhall ye be delivered out of the hand of your enemies." "Howbeit," ſays the hiſtorian, "they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner."—"So *theſe* nations," which were brought from Aſſyria, "feared the Lord, and ſerved their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as their fathers did, ſo did they."

It is natural here to remark, in the

Firſt place, The powerful influence of cuſtom and education in matters of religion.

Theſe Aſſyrians, who had been trained up in a ſuperſtitious reverence for the objects and forms of worſhip admitted in their own country, could

not be perſuaded to renounce them. They ſtill retained their early veneration for them, even after they had been inſtructed in the character of the true God, and the ſervice which he required. The ſuperſtition of the parent was tranſmitted to the children, and from them to *their* children, and ſo on from age to age.

To one who has been educated in the pure and uncorrupt principles of religion, nothing can appear more irrational and abſurd than polytheiſm and idolatry. But abſurd as they are, nothing is harder than to reclaim to juſt ſentiments of God and religion thoſe who from their youth have been educated in a veneration for idolatrous rites and cuſtoms. So hard it is to recover men from habitual errors, however fooliſh and vain, that God expreſſes a kind of aſtoniſhment at the verſatility of his own people, who had ſuddenly and eaſily been ſeduced from his rational ſervice. "Paſs over the iſles of Chittim and ſee, and ſend unto Kedar and conſider diligently, and ſee if there be ſuch a thing. Hath a nation changed her gods, which yet are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be aſtoniſhed, O ye heavens, at this!" The prejudice of education the apoſtles had to contend with in preaching the goſpel among both Jews and gentiles; and they found it one of the moſt powerful obſtructions to their ſucceſs. The intrinſic excellence and external evidence of the goſpel wrought mightily to the conviction of many: but they who profeſſed to be convinced of its truth, were ſtill fond of retaining ſome favorite parts of their old religion. The Jews were not more tenacious of the Moſaic rites, than the gentiles were of the forms uſed in their pagan feſtivals. It was much eaſier to bring both to an acknowledgment

of Chriſtianity as true, than to a renunciation of their old uſages as vain. They would receive Chriſtianity as an improvement on their former religion; but to give up a religion, which from their youth they had been accuſtomed to venerate, was a change which could be effected by no evidence leſs than miraculous, and by no power leſs than divine.

1. We may hence take occaſion to reflect on the weakneſs of human reaſon.

When we conſider what mighty improvements have been made in the arts and ſciences—in mathematics, aſtronomy, navigation and mechanics, we conceive an exalted opinion of the powers of the human mind. And, indeed, they are capable of being raiſed to a very conſiderable height. Though our ſagacity originates but few things, yet, when by ſome fortunate accident a hint is given, we can puſh our diſcoveries in natural things to a great length. But let us not think of ourſelves above that which we ought to think. If we view mankind in regard to religion and morality, we ſhall have but a humbling idea of human nature. What ſhocking abſurdities are mixed with all the religions of the world, except that which is founded in revelation? Human reaſon has never yet attained to a juſt knowledge of the divine character and government, or ſtruck out a plan of religion and virtue, free from abſurdity and folly. The wiſeſt and politeſt nations of the earth—they who have made the greateſt proficiency in arts and ſciences, have groſsly blundered in their notions of a Deity, and of the ſervice due to him.

It appears obvious to us, that there is one God; and that he is a ſpiritual, eternal, omnipreſent Being, poſſeſſed of boundleſs wiſdom, power and

goodneſs; that he is to be ſerved with pure affections and conſtant obedience; and that, whenever we offend him, his forgiveneſs is to be ſought by humble prayer and ſincere repentance. But how came we by theſe juſt and rational ſentiments? The heathens never had them. Their reaſon and invention were as good as ours; and nature held out to them the ſame light as it does to us. Yet, "profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and birds, and four-footed beaſts, and creeping things. They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worſhipped and ſerved the creature more than the Creator." Whence is it, that *we* have more rational ſentiments of God and religion? It is revelation which has made us to differ. This has taught us the character of God and the ſervice which we owe him. When theſe are taught in revelation, we ſee them to be reaſonable, and are apt to imagine, that our reaſon would have diſcovered them without any ſuch aid. But if we may form an opinion, what reaſon can do, from what is has done, we muſt ſuppoſe, that without revelation we never ſhould have had a juſt knowledge even of the firſt principles of natural religion. To revelation we are indebted for that very knowledge, which puffs us up to deſpiſe it. There is a great difference between ſeeing a thing to be reaſonable, when it is ſuggeſted to us, and originating the firſt ſuggeſtion. We are capable of the former in many inſtances—of the latter in very few.

How ſhortſighted is human reaſon—how blind in things of higheſt importance! A plain demonſtration this of the depravity of human nature. On no other ſuppoſition can we aſſign a cauſe,

why reaſon has not been as able to make religious, as natural diſcoveries. We are bound to bleſs God for that clear revelation which he has given us of his character and will. Without the light which this affords us, we ſhould have been involved in the ſame darkneſs of ignorance, and bewildered in the ſame perplexed mazes of error, as they are to whom this light has never ſhone.

2. The powerful influence of education ſhews us of what importance it is, that they, who have the care of youth, guard them againſt dangerous errors, and form them to right ſentiments in religion; for principles and opinions early implanted, and long cultivated, are not eaſily eradicated. From the influence of education the contrary inference has, indeed, been made. "For," ſay ſome, "if we inſtruct our children in religion, we ſhall form them to our own habit of thinking, and fix in them ſuch an obſtinate bias to the notions which we inculcate, that they never can think freely: it is therefore ſafeſt to leave them wholly untaught in religious matters, that, when they grow up, they may form their opinions for themſelves fairly and independently."

Is this reaſoning juſt in the things of religion? It is juſt then in every thing elſe. You need not ſtop at religion; you may as well go through with the argument. Say then, "It is not ſafe to teach our children our own method of huſbandry, leſt, attached to this method, they never ſtrike out any thing new, nor hit on any thing excellent. We will leave them to ſpend their early years in ignorance and idleneſs, that, when they come to act for themſelves, they may prove judicious and ſucceſsful huſbandmen." Every one ſees ſuch reaſoning to be abſurd in our worldly affairs. It is as abſurd in religious affairs.

But are not children liable to be biaſſed in favour of errors early taught them?--Certainly they are. And what then? Muſt you forbear to inſtruct them at all?—No: but be careful that you give them only wholeſome inſtructions.

If the danger of prejudice be a reaſon againſt *early* inſtruction, it is equally a reaſon againſt inſtruction at *any time:* for if your children ever know any thing about religion, there muſt be a time when they *begin* to know. And let them begin ever ſo late, there is the ſame danger of their being prejudiced in favour of the ſentiments firſt embraced, as if they began in childhood.

Let thoſe, who argue in this manner againſt religious education, ſpeak out, and ſay, "Religion is a mere chimera: men will do better without it than with it: it is the effect of bad education: if people be not taught it when they are young, they never will believe it, nor concern themſelves about it afterward." To this the argument plainly leads.

If there be ſuch a thing as religion, it is undeniably a matter of infinite and univerſal importance. Every one, therefore, ſhould rightly underſtand it, and fully believe it, and faithfully practiſe it. And every parent ſhould diligently teach it to his children, and guard them againſt the inſtructions which cauſe to err.

II. Another obſervation which ariſes from our text is, that religion in general is a matter of ſuch obvious concern, that every man, on the leaſt conſideration, muſt ſee himſelf obliged to be of ſome religion or other.

Theſe Aſſyrians worſhipped their ſeveral deities, as they had been taught. When they found themſelves infeſted with wild beaſts in their new ſettlement, they at once apprehended, they had been

guilty of ſome offenſive behaviour toward the God of the land; and they deſired to be inſtructed in the ſervice, which beſt would pleaſe him. They ſent for a teacher, and they ſo far attended to his inſtructions, that "they feared the Lord."

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth ſpeech, and night unto night ſheweth knowledge. There is no ſpeech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through the earth, and their words to the end of the world." What a being God is, and how he is to be worſhipped, men have been much divided in their notions; for every man will aſcribe to his deity the properties which he calls perfections, and will frame for his god a worſhip correſpondent to his ſuppoſed character. But that there is a God, and that he is to be worſhipped, mankind have almoſt univerſally agreed. The various kinds of ſuperſtition and idolatry, which have been practiſed in the world, are proofs, that men, in their corrupteſt ſtate, feel a ſenſe of their obligations to religion. Falſe reaſonings and vicious practices may gradually weaken this ſenſe of a Deity; but it is difficult ſo entirely to extinguiſh it, but that, in times of calamity and danger, it will revive and operate. Theſe idolaters, when they ſaw the beaſts of the wilderneſs making incurſions, and ſpreading deſtruction among them, immediately turned their thoughts to ſome inviſible being, who directed the motions of the animal creation; and they wiſhed to be inſtructed, how they might ſecure his favour and protection.

The general, the almoſt univerſal belief of a divine, ſuperintending power, is an evidence that this ſentiment is as ancient as the human race; for if the firſt pair had been atheiſts, tradition from

them would have given atheiſm ſuch a ſpread among their poſterity, as it never appears to have obtained. The heathens were idolaters, but not atheiſts. The ancient enemies of true religion oppoſed it, not on the principle, that there was no religion, but on the pretence, that their own religion was better. It is probable, there are more atheiſts in Chriſtian countries, than in all other parts of the world. And the reaſon is obvious: the precepts of the goſpel are ſo pure, and its ſanctions ſo ſolemn, that men of corrupt hearts cannot be reconciled to it; and yet the evidences of its truth are ſo full and ſtrong, that they cannot reject it without rejecting all religion with it; for if there be any ſuch thing as religion, it muſt be contained in the goſpel. Every reaſoning man eaſily ſees and feels the abſurdity of acknowledging religion in general, and denying the goſpel-religion. And hence the enemies of the goſpel, that they may preſerve a conſiſtency in diſcarding this, renounce religion in the groſs. And it is a circumſtance much in favour of the goſpel, that the moſt ſubtil reaſoners, conſcious, that it muſt ſtand, while natural religion ſtands, have directed their main force againſt the latter. This is a virtual acknowledgment from the enemies of the goſpel, that, if there be any religion, it muſt be here.

There are heathens, who will riſe in judgment againſt many in Chriſtian lands. Even idolaters in ages of darkneſs will condemn infidels who live in an age of light. They who, with all the abſurdity of their ſpeculative opinions, were yet awed by the apprehenſion of an inviſible power, may put to ſhame thoſe hardy ſons of impiety, who caſt off fear and reſtrain prayer; and who, while they pretend to believe there is a God, live in every reſpect as if there were none.

The ſolicitude of the idolaters in Samaria, under a threatening calamity, rebukes the ſtupidity of thouſands in times and places of ſuperior light.

The Samaritans owned an inviſible hand in the depredations of ravenous beaſts: but how many overlook this hand in the calamities brought on them by the rapacity of unreaſonable and wicked men? *Thoſe* idolaters ſuppoſed that the wild beaſts, which infeſted them, were let looſe to puniſh them for ſome omiſſion of duty to the god of the country; and they were anxious to know wherein they had offended him: but how many, forgetting their own impieties and the juſtice of providence, impute all their calamities to the immediate inſtruments and viſible cauſes of them? *They*, in the time of their trouble, ſent to Aſſyria for one of the captive prieſts of Iſrael to come and inſtruct them in the will of Jehovah: but how many neglect to hear divine inſtruction, when it is brought to their doors, and even refuſe to obey it when it is ſounded in their ears? *They* paid ſo much attention to their new teacher, as to reform, in ſome meaſure, their ſyſtem of religion, and ſet up the worſhip of the God of Iſrael: but how many are wholly unreformed by the corrections of God's hand, and the admonitions of his word, and live unmindful of their obligations to that Almighty Being, whom ſtill they acknowledge? *Their* reformation was indeed but a poor defective buſineſs, ſince they ſtopped where they did. But yet they went farther than many go under judgments more obviouſly divine, and under inſtructions more clear and convincing. In *them* there was ſome amendment; in many there is none at all.

It becomes us to enquire, how far this rebuke falls on us. May not ſome confeſs, that under

their ſuperior light and diſtinguiſhed advantages, they never went ſo far in religion, as theſe poor Aſſyrians did? Bring the enquiry home. See how it is with you. You have been educated under the cleareſt light of divine revelation—have been inſtructed in the nature and perfections, in the government and will of God—have been taught what is the deſign of perſonal afflictions and public judgments, and what is the moral uſe which you ſhould make of them—have heard your duty, in all its branches, often ſtated and inculcated, and the terms of your eternal felicity repeatedly propoſed and urged. And what have you done? Have you ſhewn as much ſenſe of a Deity—as much regard to his governing hand—as much concern to learn his will—as much ſolicitude to approve yourſelves to him, as thoſe poor heathens? If you live without prayer—without attendance on the means of religious inſtruction—without ſelf-examination—without a ſenſe of your dependence—and without regard to God's providence, you are more remote from religion than they were.

The concern in Samaria to obtain the favour of the god of the land, and to be inſtructed in his will, ſeems to have been *general*. Is there any ſuch general concern among us? There are doubtleſs many who believe the truth, and feel the importance of religion. But is this our general character? Is there not rather a prevailing indifference and careleſsneſs?

As the people in Samaria ſent far for a prieſt of the Lord to inſtruct them; ſo, we may conclude, they diligently attended on his inſtructions when he came. This prieſt would naturally call them together to hear the law on the ſabbath—the day divinely inſtituted for the purpoſe; and certainly

they paid ſo much regard to the day, as to aſſemble and receive inſtruction. But how many among us waſte the ſabbath in indolence, or profane it by unneceſſary labours and vain amuſements? How many contemptuouſly turn away from the ſtated inſtructions of the ſanctuary, and ſay of God's worſhip, What a wearineſs is it?

Only one judgment, the incurſion of ravenous beaſts, brought theſe Samaritans to conſideration. But what good effect has been produced among us by a ſeries of remarkable diſpenſations both corrective and merciful? We may well be aſhamed and afraid when we reflect, how much *they* did, and how little *we* do, to avert the diſpleaſure, and procure the favour of God.

But ſtill let it be remembered, that they came ſhort of a ſincere and acceptable ſervice, becauſe, while they feared the Lord, they ſerved their graven images. The motives, which governed them in their religion, were of a worldly nature. They were more concerned to rid the land of wild beaſts, than to rid themſelves of their ſins. And inſtead of directing their ſervice to the one ſupreme God, they divided it between him and their own falſe divinities.

We ſee, then, that men may make the appearance of a reformation, and yet fall ſhort of ſincere repentance. Let us not reſt in external forms, partial amendments, and divided ſervices; but devote ourſelves wholly and without reſerve to God, and walk before him in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity. The ſincerity of the heart is the life and ſoul of religion. And ſince, without this, men may ſeem to do much in religion, let us take good heed to ourſelves, that we reſt not in the form of godlineſs, when the power of it is wanting. There are thoſe who ſeem to themſelves to

be religious, when all their religion is vain. See that ye be not deceived. God requires truth in the inward parts. "If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature; old things are paſſed away, and all things are become new."

This brings us to another obſervation from our text, That true and acceptable religion is pure and ſimple, directed to God and to him only.

This obſervation we will reſerve to be illuſtrated in another diſcourſe.

SERMON XXVI.

True Religion pure and ſimple.

II. KINGS xvii. 40, 41.

Howbeit, they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner. So theſe nations feared the Lord and ſerved their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, ſo did they unto this day.

THE Aſſyrians, who were ſent to re-people Samaria, after the native inhabitants had been carried to Aſſyria, found themſelves dangerouſly infeſted with lions. This calamity they imputed to their ignorance of the religious ſervice, which Jehovah, whom they called the god of the land, required of them. A Jewiſh prieſt was ſent from Aſſyria to inſtruct them in the character and worſhip of the true God. Under his miniſtration, they were ſo far reformed, that they feared the Lord; but ſtill, attached to the notions in which they had been educated, they worſhipped their graven images. And thus did their children after them from one generation to another.

Hence we have remarked,

I. The powerful influence of cuſtom and education in matters of religion. And,

II. The general ſenſe of mankind, that there is ſuch a thing as religion, and that it is a matter of univerſal and indiſpenſable obligation.

We now proceed to remark,

III. That true religion is pure and ſimple, free from corrupt mixtures, and uniformly directed to one great end.

Theſe Aſſyrians "feared the Lord." They acknowledged the God of Iſrael; but, at the ſame time, they ſerved their own gods; and therefore the ſervice, which they paid to the true God, was of little value.

As there is one God, the ſole author and governor of the univerſe, and the fountain of all excellencies any where ſeen, and of all bleſſings any where enjoyed, ſo we are required to give him our higheſt regards, and to ſerve him with undivided affection; and we are forbidden to worſhip any other object in oppoſition to him, or in conjunction with him. And to us, who have been taught the unity of the godhead, nothing is more obvious than the neceſſity of directing all our religious honours and ſervices uniformly to this all-perfect being. We eaſily ſee, that thoſe Samaritans, by mingling idolatry with the worſhip of the true God, utterly corrupted their religion. But let us enquire, whether we, in ſome other way, may not be guilty of the ſame corruption.

When we are under any remarkable and ſevere affliction, we perhaps think of God, acknowledge his power and fear his anger; we are more ſtrict and conſtant in attending on his worſhip; we pray oftener and deſire the prayers of others. But do we, at the ſame time, ſearch our hearts, mortify our luſts, ſubdue our paſſions and renounce our ſins?—If not, what is our religion better than the motley religion of the Samaritans? The man,

who, in a time of affliction, only becomes more engaged in the external forms of devotion, and is ſtill unbounded in his avarice, unjuſt in his dealings, intemperate in his enjoyments, ungoverned in his paſſions, profane in his language, or ſenſual in his affections, is but like thoſe who feared the Lord and ſerved their own gods.

We are required to love and fear God with all our heart. Our external ſervices are of little value farther than they are animated with an inward regard to him. If our hearts be principally ſet on riches, honours, pleaſures, or any earthly objects, we are as really guilty of idolatry, as they who worſhip an idol; becauſe we transfer to them the regards which are due to him. Hence the coveteous man is called an idolater; and they who ſerve divers luſts and pleaſures, are ſaid to make them their God. How much ſo ever we may do in a way of external ſervice to God; if the world, or any thing which belongs merely to the world, be ſupreme in our hearts, we are like thoſe who feared the Lord, and ſerved their own gods. "No man can ſerve two maſters. If he love the one, he will hate the other. He cannot ſerve God and mammon. The friendſhip of the world is enmity with God. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

God has given us a revelation to inſtruct us in his will and in the terms of his favour and acceptance. If we believe this revelation to be from him, we muſt take it as it is, and obey it without reſerve, neither preſuming to ſupply its ſuppoſed defects by our own invention, nor to retrench its ſuppoſed redundancies by our own wiſdom. If eſteeming ſome of its precepts too ſevere, we relax them; or ſome of its doctrines too myſterious, we reject them; or if imagining

it has not taught us our duty completely, we add to it ſome new rules of conduct; or thinking its motives inſufficient, we tack to them ſome fictions of our own fancy; we corrupt the pure religion, which God has taught us; and, while we profeſs to ſerve him, we worſhip our graven images. To ſome in the apoſtle's days the goſpel was too myſterious, in its more grand and ſublime doctrines, for their proud reaſon to receive. The reſurrection of the dead ſeemed a thing incredible; and Chriſt crucified for the ſins of men was fooliſhneſs. To others it was too plain and ſimple, and they would not truſt it without the addition of the favorite ceremonies of their old religion. Hence St. Paul's caution to the Corinthians, "I am jealous over you with a godly jealouſy; for I have eſpouſed you unto *one* huſband, that I may preſent you as a chaſte virgin to Chriſt; but I fear, leſt your minds ſhould be corrupted from the *ſimplicity* that is in him." The ſame caution he gives to the Coloſſians; "As ye have received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo walk ye in him. Beware leſt any man ſpoil you through philoſophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Chriſt; for ye are *complete* in him."

If we acknowledge *one* God, we are to yield ourſelves to his *whole* ſervice. When we have offended him, we muſt regain his favour by repentance, and continue in his favour by obedience. In our repentance we muſt renounce every falſe way; in our obedience we muſt have reſpect to all his commandments. A repentance with a reſerve in favour of ſome known ſins; and an obedience with exceptions againſt certain plain duties, is like the reformation of the Samaritans, who feared God, and retained their idolatry. He who

indulges one favorite iniquity, though he diſcard every other, is not a penitent; and he who offends in one point, though he obey the reſt of the law, is not a ſaint.

Again. The goſpel teaches us, that Jeſus Chriſt is the only Mediator between God and men, and no man can come to the Father, but by him—that his atonement and righteouſneſs is the only ground of our pardon and acceptance, and on this ground our faith and hope muſt reſt. "There is ſalvation in no other, and there is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby they muſt be ſaved." "We are juſtified by faith in Chriſt, without the deeds of the law;" for this requires perfection, and accepts of nothing leſs. We muſt therefore "glory in Chriſt Jeſus, and have no confidence in the fleſh."

But how many, while they pretend to believe in Chriſt, place a dependence on ſome other way of ſalvation? Many of the Jews, as we have already obſerved, inſtead of ſubmitting themſelves to the righteouſneſs of God through faith, went about to eſtabliſh a righteouſneſs of their own. They allowed that Chriſt was a Saviour; but they imagined, that they could not be ſaved by him without an obſervance of the ceremonial law. They thought, that without this appendage, the goſpel-ſcheme would be defective. Their religion reſembled that of the Samaritans, who, in conjunction with the true God, worſhipped gods of their own.

Of much the ſame nature is the religion of thoſe, who rely on their own righteouſneſs, in conjunction with that of the Redeemer, as the ground of their acceptance with God. I ſay, as the *ground* of their acceptance; for I am not now ſpeaking of the *terms* and *conditions* of acceptance. Theſe

muſt undoubtedly be ſome internal and perſonal qualifications.

Chriſt came into the world to ſave *ſinners*—not to ſave the innocent and righteous. If we are not ſinners, we have no need of his interpoſition; our innocence—our righteouſneſs will ſecure us. But it muſt be ſuch a righteouſneſs, as God's law demands, a final continuance in all things written in the law to do them. If we come ſhort of this, we have ſinned. If we have ſinned, we deſerve death. And if we deſerve death for our evil works, we cannot deſerve deliverance from it for our good works. However perfect our future works may be, they are but our reaſonable ſervice, and therefore can never cancel paſt guilt.

"Chriſt has redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us." Our acceptance therefore is grounded wholly on what he has done; not at all on what we have done. The remiſſion of ſins that are paſt is by faith in Chriſt's blood, not by reliance on our own future obedience. A ſinner wholly reformed and perfectly obedient in future, if ſuch a character were to be found, would not, indeed, continue to accumulate his guilt and demerit; for no man will be puniſhed for ſins which he never committed; but then he would not extinguiſh the guilt already contracted by the ſins which he had committed. We muſt therefore depend wholly on the atonement of Chriſt—not at all on perſonal recommendations, as the proper ground of our pardon and acceptance.

Works of holineſs and obedience are required in the goſpel, as *neceſſary to*, but not *meritorious of* ſalvation. They are only the *conditions of*, and *qualifications for* future happineſs—not the *grand conſideration* on which God is pleaſed to ſhew us

mercy and releaſe us from paſt guilt ; for it is only through Chriſt that our beſt works are accepted ; and it is only through him that we obtain grace for the performance of ſuch works as can be accepted. " By grace we are ſaved, through faith, and that not of ourſelves, it is the gift of God ; not of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt ; for we are his workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus to good works, which God hath ordained, that we ſhould walk in them."

We muſt not imagine, that we may be accepted on eaſier terms—on a more ſlight and partial repentance than ſome others ; or that we ſtand fairer than they for acceptance on the ſame terms, becauſe we are not yet ſo great ſinners as they are, or becauſe we have done ſome duties which they neglect. For whatever different degrees of guilt there may be in different ſinners, repentance is in all the indiſpenſable condition of pardon ; and true repentance, though attended with ſome variety of circumſtances, is ſubſtantially the ſame in all who are ſubjects of it. It is a turning of the heart and life from ſin to God. We muſt not imagine, that there are certain eminent ſervices to be performed, or certain rounds of duty to be run, before we can truſt the righteouſneſs of Chriſt to juſtify us, or before we may ſeek his grace to ſanctify us ; for the righteouſneſs of God through the faith of Chriſt is unto all that believe, and there is no difference. He who is athirſt is invited to come to Chriſt for the grace of the Spirit ; and the Spirit itſelf by its inward motions, repeats the invitation, and ſays, " Come."

Pardon is offered to all ſinners, ſmall and great, young and old, upon the ſame terms. In this reſpect there is no difference. The ſame God is rich in mercy to all who call on him. The blood

of Chriſt can waſh out the deepeſt guilt. He came to ſave the chief of ſinners. Grace abounds to the humble penitent, how much ſoever ſin has abounded. No ſinner is accepted, but in a way of repentance toward God and faith toward Chriſt; and in this way none is rejected.

We cannot be too zealous of good works, nor lay too much ſtreſs upon them, while we regard them in their place, as duties required, as fruits of faith, as expreſſions of love, as conditions of a reward, and as evidences of ſincerity. But if we put them in the place of that which the Redeemer has done—if we rely upon them as the ground of our acceptance, and the great conſideration on which God forgives our ſins—if we imagine they give us a claim on his juſtice for an exemption from puniſhment, and for the beſtowment of a reward—if we think he would deal cruelly with us to reject us from his favour after we have done ſo much for him; we then go about to eſtabliſh a righteouſneſs of our own in aid of Chriſt's righteouſneſs; we are corrupted from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt; we mar the virtue of all our works by our pride and ſelf-confidence; and we imitate the religion of thoſe, who feared the Lord, and ſerved their graven images.

The ſinner, awakened to a conviction of his ſins and a ſenſe of his guilt, is not to wait, until he has made himſelf better, before he ventures to apply to the mercy of God in Chriſt for relief, as if there were not worthineſs enough in Chriſt to recommend, nor grace enough in God to regard a creature ſo vile, as he finds himſelf at preſent; but he muſt, immediately and without delay, hope and ſeek for the divine influence to renew and ſanctify him, and for the divine mercy to pardon and ſave him, through that Redeemer who died

to ſave the chief of ſinners—through that Saviour who invites all, and ſuch as have no money, to come and buy wine and milk without money and without price—through that Surety who has paid the debt of five hundred pence, as well as the debt of fifty. He ought now to apply himſelf to Chriſt, relying on the grace of his Spirit, and the atonement of his blood, to ſanctify him from ſin, and juſtify him from guilt. The goſpel requires no previous courſe of preparation for ſuch an exerciſe of faith as this; it only requires, that we feel our guilt, danger and impotence. Until we perceive our unhappy condition in ourſelves, we ſhall not ſee our need of a Saviour; when we do perceive this, we muſt repair to him. If we thirſt, we muſt go to him and drink; if we be weary, we muſt go to him for reſt; if we know that we are poor, blind and naked, we muſt go to him for tried gold that we may be rich, for eye-ſalve that we may ſee, and for white raiment that we may be clothed. We are to conſider him, not as a partial, but complete Saviour, and go to him for all that we want—for righteouſneſs to juſtify us, light to direct us, grace to purify us, and ſtrength to eſtabliſh us; for "Chriſt is of God made to believers wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification and redemption."

Faith in Chriſt is often required in the goſpel, as the condition of ſalvation. But we muſt remember, that faith in Chriſt, as the Mediator, terminates in God the Father. "By him we believe in God, who raiſed him from the dead and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God." We muſt not go to Chriſt to ſave us from God, as if all goodneſs were in the Son, and nothing but ſtern juſtice in the Father; for "God ſo loved the world, as to give his only be-

gotten Son, that whoſo believeth in him might have everlaſting life." But we muſt go to God in the name of Chriſt, "who has once ſuffered for our ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God"—might open a way for the exerciſe of mercy to us, and give us ſuch diſplays of God's grace and love, as ſhould reconcile us to him.

Let it farther be obſerved; Though the awakened ſinner is not to wait until he makes himſelf better, before he truſts in Chriſt and ſeeks ſalvation in his name; yet he muſt wait until he finds himſelf better, before he truſts that he *is* in Chriſt and actually *entitled* to ſalvation.

There is a great difference between truſting in Chriſt for ſalvation, and truſting that this ſalvation is already ours. For the former nothing more is neceſſary than a ſenſe of our wants, and a view of Chriſt's ſufficiency. For the latter it is neceſſary that we experience the power of the goſpel in ſanctifying our hearts. If we feel our guilt and impotence, and know Chriſt's glorious name, we ſhall put our truſt in him. "And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." "When our hearts condemn us not, we have confidence toward God." "We ſhew our faith by our works." "We conclude that we have paſſed from death to life, becauſe we love the brethren."

A ſincere faith gives us an immediate intereſt in the ſalvation of Chriſt; but our *knowledge* of this intereſt muſt ariſe from the work of faith in purifying our ſouls unto unfeigned love of the brethren. There is no condemnation to them who are in Chriſt Jeſus; and we know that we are in Chriſt, when we walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit. "He who ſaith, he abideth in Chriſt, ought himſelf alſo to walk even as Chriſt

walked. He who keepeth his commandments dwelleth in Chriſt, and Chriſt in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us by his Spirit which he hath given us. And if we are led by his Spirit, we ſhall not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh; for they who are ſenſual have not the Spirit."

In the improvement of this ſubject, we are,

Firſt, naturally led to obſerve, that true religion, as taught by the revelation of God, is far more eaſy to be underſtood and practiſed, than the religions contrived by the invention of men. The former is plain and ſimple; the latter are obſcure and perplexed. The Aſſyrians, who were ſettled in Samaria, greatly embarraſſed their religion by mixing the ſuperſtitions of their country with the worſhip of the God of Iſrael. Had they been content to obſerve only the latter, their ſervice would have been, not only more reaſonable, but more cheap and practicable. The ſame may be ſaid of thoſe Chriſtians, who in the apoſtles' times, added to the inſtitutions of the goſpel the various rites of their former religions. They took on themſelves a yoke, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear; when the yoke which Chriſt laid on them was eaſy and his burden was light. A ſuperſtitious zealot enquired of the prophet, "Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord? Shall I come with thouſands of rams, or with rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firſt born for my tranſgreſſion, and the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul?" The prophet anſwered, "He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do juſtly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" How plain and ſimple is the divine direction, compared with the inventions of human ſuperſtition?

Wiſdom's ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, but the way of tranſgreſſors is hard. The path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, but the path of the wicked is as darkneſs. The man of the world has no certain rule to direct his purſuit, nor divine promiſe to enſure his object. He is perplexed in his ſchemes; he ſhifts his plans; he guards againſt diſappointments, and runs into them by the courſe which he takes to avoid them. He envies the ſucceſs of his competitors, and is mortified at his own miſcarriages. He uſes art and diſguiſe to accompliſh his projections, and when he has accompliſhed them his mind is ſtill diſſatisfied. But the man of religion has one great object in view, the favour of God; and one ſure rule to guide him, the word of God. His path lies plain and ſtrait before him. He has only to walk right on, truſting in the grace of God to ſtrengthen his ſteps, and in the promiſe of God to make the end ſafe and happy. In his doubts, he has no occaſion to aſcertain the worldly conſequences of the action in queſtion; he may apply directly to his rule, and there learn his duty; and when he has found it, nothing remains but to do it, and leave the conſequences with God. Thus the good man is ſatisfied from himſelf. "His rejoicing is the teſtimony of his conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, he has had his converſation in the world."

Secondly. Our ſubject ſhould be improved to guard our hearts againſt every kind of corruption in religion.

As we believe there is one God, ſo our affections ſhould be directed to, and concentrated in him; and other objects ſhould be regarded only

in ſubordination to the favour of this ſupreme all-perfect Being.

As he is one, ſo his will is uniform—not, like the will of man, devious from, and inconſiſtent with itſelf. He is of one mind; who can turn him? Let us then be conſtant in his ſervice, doing his will from the heart, guiding our actions by his commands as our only rule, and ſeeking his favour as our only happineſs.

As we believe there is one Saviour, let us come to God through him, do all things in his name, rely on his righteouſneſs as the only ground of our hopes, and truſt in his interceſſion as the only effectual recommendation of our unworthy prayers.

Thirdly. We ſee that ſincere religion in the heart is a great attainment—greater than many perhaps imagine.

Religion conſiſts in a heart uniformly and unreſervedly devoted to God; or in a ſupreme love to him, governing all our affections, and directing all our actions. Men may do much in religion from worldly motives. The perſons mentioned in our text did ſo. The people of Iſrael, in a time of famine, aſſembled themſelves for corn and wine, but rebelled againſt God. Some, in our Saviour's day, ſought him with diligence, and ſpared no pains to find him, not becauſe they loved his doctrines, but becauſe they had eaten of his loaves. This was a worldly religion. God was not its immediate object.

Men may do much in external duties, and yet be deſtitute of a holy temper. They may act in ſome good things with zeal and engagedneſs, and yet retain their favourite ſins. The Samaritans took much pains to learn how they muſt fear the Lord; but ſtill they held faſt their idolatry. The young man mentioned in the goſpel had a ſtrong

desire to enter into life; but he chose to hazard the loss of it, rather than abandon his worldly pursuits.

Whatever we do in religion, if we indulge any known sin, our religion will not carry us to heaven. Whatever works we perform, if we glory in them as the foundation of our claim to heaven, and forget our dependence on the righteousness of the Saviour, our works are vain.

Fourthly. Our subject may lead us to reflect on the heinous nature of sin. The excellency of religion consists in its being directed to God; and the great evil of sin consists in its being committed against him. Religion is a conformity; sin is an opposition to the divine nature. Religion is a love of God's commands and a submission to his will; sin is a hatred of his laws and a rebellion against his authority. Religion is resigning ourselves to God's government, and yielding ourselves to his disposal; sin is rising up against God, and setting ourselves above him.

In this view, how horrible must sin appear! How amazing is the guilt of those who thus have treated, and thus continue to treat the Almighty!

Do you wonder that rational men should be so stupid as to set up idols for objects of adoration, in opposition to, or in conjunction with the supreme Jehovah? Why not also wonder at yourselves, that you should set up the interests and pleasures of the world, as the objects of your supreme affection?

Fifthly. What abundant cause of rejoicing have we, that there is an allsufficient Saviour to whom we may repair?

Had we nothing, but our own righteousness, to rest upon, we must sink in despair. Such sinful creatures as we are, have nothing to recommend

them in the preſence of a holy God. But Jeſus has brought in everlaſting righteouſneſs, and the greateſt ſinner may have the benefit of it. Did ſinners realize their own condition, they would apply to this Saviour; they would ſeek him earneſtly and conſtantly; they would cry to him day and night, and not hold their peace, till his righteouſneſs came to them as brightneſs, and his ſalvation as a lamp that burneth.

To conclude: Since there is one God, the great object of religion, and one Mediator by whom we muſt draw near to God, and ſince the religion which he requires is pure and ſimple; let us prove what is true and acceptable religion, take it as he has preſcribed it, adopt it in its ſimplicity without human additions, direct all our ſervices to him, and do all things in the name of Chriſt through whom alone we have acceptance.

SERMON XXVII.

Folly conſpicuous in a Virtuous Character.

ECCLESIASTES x. 1.

Dead flies cauſe the ointment of the apothecary to ſend forth a ſtinking favour: ſo doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wiſdom and honor.

THE preacher here teaches us a very uſeful leſſon; that the wiſer and better a man is reputed to be, the greater caution he needs to uſe in his language and behavior, leſt he viciate the reputation which he has acquired. For as dead flies, though but ſmall inſects, falling into a pot of ſweet ointment, will render it rancid and diſguſtful; ſo errors and follies, ſmall in themſelves, will appear as great blemiſhes in the character of a man, who is highly valued for his ſuperior virtue and wiſdom; and faults ſcarcely noticed in other men, will be imputed to him as intolerable crimes. "The caſe of men eminent for virtue," ſays one, "is peculiarly difficult, becauſe their errors, though ever ſo ſmall, are not eaſily pardoned. As in a diamond of great luſtre, the eye is offended by the leaſt ſpeck, or the ſmalleſt cloud, which in a groſſer ſtone would not be obſerved; ſo in men of ſingular abilities, the leaſt infirmities are quickly diſcerned and made matter of converſation, when in perſons of meaner character they would be wholly unnoticed, or eaſily forgiven. A little folly in a wiſe man, a ſmall ſin in a ſtrictly honeſt man, a ſlight indecency in a very polite man, much derogates from his fame and reputation; when the ſame things in men of different characters

would paſs uncenſured, and perhaps unobſerved."

In the writings of Solomon, wiſdom and folly uſually ſignify virtue and vice. We may therefore, by the man in reputation for wiſdom, underſtand the man eminent for virtue; and, by a little folly, we may underſtand the infirmities and indiſcretions incident to ſuch a man.

The truth, then, ſuggeſted in our text will be this; that ſmall offences are eaſily obſerved, and freely cenſured in men of diſtinguiſhed reputation for religion.

This we often ſee to be a fact. Thoſe very things, which paſs for indifferent in the men of the world, are condemned as criminal in men of reputed piety. Virtue and vice are the ſame in their nature; but we judge of them differently according to the character of the perſons in whom they are found.

There are many who appear to live without any governing regard to religion. They take no care to educate their children in ſentiments of piety, or to keep up the worſhip of God in their families. They are much addicted to pleaſure, company and amuſement. Their language is ſometimes profane, and often looſe and unguarded. They neglect the ſtated means of religion and treat with indifference the inſtituted ordinances of God. Thus they paſs along in the world, and few take any unfavorable notice of them. If one reprove them, they are ready to vindicate themſelves; and perhaps there are ſome, beſides themſelves, who will plead in their excuſe, and palliate their neglects and tranſgreſſions. But if a man who profeſſes *religion*, or ſuſtains an office in the *church*, ſhould for once appear to be guilty of the ſame exceptionable conduct, will it thus paſs off unobſerved? Or will it meet the ſame excuſes? No: one *raſh* expreſſion from this *good* man will be more ſeverely condemned, than a hundred profane *oaths* from the *cuſtomary* ſwearer. A ſingle inſtance

of inordinate *paſſion* in him will be more talked of, than the daily *ravings* of thoſe who have *no rule* over their ſpirits. If his children for once run to exceſs, break the ſabbath, or treſpaſs on good order, he is reproached as a man who exerciſes no government in his family. But youths of other families may make themſelves much more vile; and few, except they happen to ſuffer injury from them, will ever reprove them, or even complain, that they are not reſtrained. If the Chriſtian, crouded with buſineſs or company, ſhould ſometimes omit the ſtated devotions of his houſe, this omiſſion will be matter of much animadverſion; but a total *neglect* in other people is ſcarcely imputed as a fault. If a temperate man ſhould by accident be overtaken and diſguiſed with ſtrong drink, he becomes the talk of the whole neighborhood; but a ſot may get drunk half a dozen times in a week, and little is ſaid about him, and little pains taken to reform or reſtrain him.

Yea; men of immoral and vicious lives will remark with indignation in the Chriſtian the ſmalleſt appearance of thoſe vices, which they themſelves notoriouſly indulge without remorſe. They can ſee a *mote* in a good man's eye, when they feel not a *beam* in their own. They wonder that the Chriſtian profeſſor can take ſuch liberties; but ſeldom think of their own iniquities. The apoſtle, in ſtrong terms, reproves this ſelf-deceit and blind partiality. "Thou art inexcuſable, O man, whoſoever thou art, that judgeſt; for wherein thou judgeſt another, thou condemneſt thyſelf; for thou that judgeſt, doſt the ſame thing. Thou that teacheſt another, teacheſt thou not thyſelf? Thou that preacheſt, a man ſhould not ſteal, doſt thou ſteal? Thou that ſayſt, a man ſhould not commit adultery, doſt thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorreſt idols, doſt thou commit ſacrilege?"

The partial world, in the ſeverity of their cenſure, condemn in good men many things, which in their nature are really innocent, and which they themſelves practiſe with freedom, and without ſuſpicion of guilt. How often was our Saviour reproached by the Phariſees for healing the ſick, and relieving the diſtreſſed on the ſabbath day; when they would have felt no ſcruple to lift a *beaſt* out of a *pit*, or *lead* him to *water* on the ſame day? Jeſus might not do as much on the ſabbath, for a human creature, as they might do for one of their *cattle*. He came in the high character of the Son of God. He reproved the proud Phariſees for their hypocriſy. Stung with his reproofs, they determined to blaſt his reputation, and ſink him below the ſons of men. Real faults in him they could find none; and they ſtudied to turn his virtues into faults.

The apoſtle Paul exhorts Chriſtians to "provide things honeſt in the ſight of all men—to walk in wiſdom toward them, who are without—to take heed that their good be not evil ſpoken of." He ſuppoſes that the men of the world will inſpect the manners and obſerve the actions of the profeſſors of the goſpel. And let them do ſo. Chriſtians will hence become more watchful; and perhaps their enemies more wiſe. The apoſtle Paul adviſes Chriſtians to walk with great caution and circumſpection, and to ſhew themſelves patterns of good works, that their enemies may be aſhamed, having no evil thing to ſay of them. For himſelf he profeſſes a concern to cut off occaſion from them, who deſire an occaſion to reproach the goſpel. Many things, which he had a right to do, he would forbear, rather than expoſe religion to the obloquy of deſigning and unreaſonable men.

Saint Peter intreats Chriſtians to have their converſation honeſt among the gentiles, that they

who ſpake evil of them, as evil doers, might, by the good works which they beheld in them, glorify God in the day of viſitation.

Theſe repeated cautions given by the apoſtles, ſhew their apprehenſion, that Chriſtians were then, and ever would be ſtrictly watched by a jealous world; and that the ſmalleſt errors and imprudences in their conduct would be made the occaſion of reproach to Chriſtianity itſelf.

The fact being undeniable, let us enquire, what are the cauſes.

1. This is partly owing to the ſtrong *contraſt* between the particular inſtances of their folly and their general character for wiſdom.

As every ſtain is viſible on a white and clean garment, ſo the ſmalleſt failings are noticed in men of eminent virtue and holineſs. In a vicious or unprincipled man we *expect* to ſee a conduct anſwerable to his general character. If he be unjuſt, profane, intemperate, or deceitful, we are not diſappointed, for he made no pretenſions to a religious faith or a virtuous life. But if a man, who has profeſſed to believe the reality and to experience the power of godlineſs, and who, for a time, has lived, or ſeemed to live anſwerably to his profeſſion, turn to folly and wickedneſs, the groſs and palpable contradiction between his preſent conduct and former character, ſtrikes us with a kind of horror. It is a change which we did not expect. We were perſuaded of him better things. The ſame conduct in a man of profligate manners and diſſolute principles, would have been much leſs noticed; for he never pretended to any thing better. It is all of a piece with his prevailing character.

2. In this caſe, there is much to be attributed to *prejudice* and *ill will*.

Fools look with malice and diſpleaſure on the

man who is in reputation for wiſdom; and they would detract from the excellence of his character, becauſe it eclipſes their own. They are watchful to eſpy ſome error in his opinions, ſome fault in his manners, ſome defect in his virtues. When they have diſcovered, or think they have diſcovered ſome miſcarriage in him, they are pleaſed and gratified. They make it the ſubject of their converſation. They magnify it beyond bounds. They annex to it circumſtances which have no foundation in truth, and ſpread the ſcandal into all companies, where they think it will be received. Charity hopes all things, and bears all things; but envy rejoices in iniquity.

3. Some there are who obſerve and magnify the failings of good men, that they may *juſtify themſelves*.

The pure and virtuous manners of the Chriſtian are a cenſure and reproof on the guilty world. The wicked and ungodly, when they view his amiable character, and obſerve his uſeful and blameleſs manners, feel themſelves condemned. They wiſh to remove the reproach, which juſtly falls upon them. They are vigilant to find ſomething in the Chriſtian, which may be improved to their own juſtification or excuſe. If *he* deviates from the ſtrict rules of virtue, in any inſtance, this, they hope, will vindicate *them*. They do no worſe than *he* does. If ſuch ſins are found in a *ſaint*, they imagine, that the ſame things, and a hundred others as bad, may be *excuſed* in *them*. If the ſaint, notwithſtanding his ſins, will go to heaven, why ſhould *their* ſins exclude *them*. And they will venture to do thoſe things *habitually*, which the Chriſtian has perhaps done under ſome particular temptation, and for which he has ſought pardon by deep repentance. They argue and conduct as if an *act* of ſin in a good man, would juſtify a *courſe* of ſin in them; as if what was the effect of *ſurprize* in *him* may be matter of deliberate *choice* in

them; as if what was in him followed with repentance, may be practiſed by them with ſelf approbation.

There is many a ſinner, who is much better pleaſed with the ſtory of David's adultery and murder, and Peter's perfidy and falſehood, than he is with the account of their deep repentance, or with the narrative of all their virtues. Their virtues condemn him: their *tranſgreſſions* are the main ſupport of his hopes.

For the ſame reaſon, that ſinners attend ſo much to the falls of good men recorded in ſcripture, they are gratified with the tranſgreſſions of reputed Chriſtians now on earth. If they ſee a neighbor, who is in high eſteem for piety, wandering out of the way, and deviating from the ſtrait path of goſpel purity, they are highly pleaſed, becauſe if this good man, (and a good man in ſuch a caſe they allow him to be; if he) can ſo greatly offend and not loſe his character, they hope *their own* offences are conſiſtent with goodneſs. Hence the ſmalleſt offences of the Chriſtian are exaggerated into enormous crimes, that they may better ſerve to pacify the guilty conſciences of ſinners.

There are many, who judge of their own character by a compariſon of themſelves with other men. Theſe derive a ſecret pleaſure from the ſins of the godly, becauſe hereby they ſeem to ſtand in a more favourable light. The Phariſee, when he thanked God, that he was not as other men, felt a real ſatisfaction in their ſuppoſed wickedneſs, becauſe this was the main ground on which his hope could ſtand. There are many ſuch ſelf-deceivers. The ſins of others do much more, than their own virtues, to raiſe and ſtrengthen their hopes. If David's impurity, Peter's apoſtacy, and a few more tranſgreſſions of good men were taken out of the bible, they would be undone. Their hope would find no ground, on which it could ſet its foot.

4. There are ſome who magnify good men's faults out of enmity to religion, and with an aim to bring it into diſrepute.

They hate religion, becauſe it teſtifies of them, that their works are evil. Our Saviour ſays, "He that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved." Their enmity to the truth prompts them to aſperſe and reproach all who endeavor to ſupport it, and thoſe chiefly, who are moſt able, and moſt active to ſupport it. If they can ſee in *them* any error of conduct, they will rejoice in ſo good an opportunity to obſtruct their influence. If they can ſee none, they will hatch the more in their own dark imagination.

5. The failings of good men, as they are matter of joy and exultation to the enemies, are matter of grief and humiliation to the friends of religion, becauſe they are peculiarly injurious to its intereſt.

The open tranſgreſſions of Chriſtian profeſſors are not in themſelves more criminal, than ſimilar tranſgreſſions in others, who enjoy the ſame light and the ſame means. It is not the profeſſion, but the enjoyment of the goſpel, which aggravates the guilt of the diſobedient. But ſuch is the malignity of infidels and gainſayers, that, while they excuſe their own ſins, they will make the ſins of profeſſors an objection againſt the goſpel itſelf. David's crimes gave occaſion to the enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme. Hence the godly are in a peculiar manner affected with the tranſgreſſions and falls of their brethren; for thereby religion itſelf is wounded.

From theſe cauſes even a little folly will be much obſerved in thoſe who are in reputation for wiſdom and honour.

Let us now attend to the improvement of our ſubject.

1. We ſee that it is dangerous to make too high pretenſions to religion, becauſe we thus render our faults more conſpicuous, and conſequently ſhall bring on religion greater diſhonor.

The man who profeſſes a higher degree of goodneſs, than he ever has attained; or than man, in

the preſent imperfect ſtate, is capable of attaining, will hardly be allowed full credit for the goodneſs which he has. It is ſo in all other profeſſions, and it is ſo in the religious profeſſion. He who aſſumes a character which he cannot ſupport, ſinks much lower, in the general eſtimation, than if his pretenſions had been more modeſt and humble.

They who would be Chriſt's diſciples, are adviſed to ſit down and count the coſt—to conſider whether they can take the croſs and follow him—whether they can for his ſake relinquiſh all worldly intereſts and connexions.

We ſhould ſet out in the religious life with a perſuaſion of its importance, and with a ſenſe of our own weakneſs—with an apprehenſion of dangers before us, and with a reliance on the grace of God. We ſhould apply the caution given by the apoſtle to Chriſtians in his day; "Be not high-minded, but fear"—"Let us fear, leſt a promiſe being left us of entering into God's reſt, any of you ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it."

Solomon warns us, that "pride goes before deſtruction, and a haughty ſpirit before a fall." Confidence in ourſelves, not only expoſes us to the power of temptation, but alſo renders our tranſgreſſions more conſpicuous in the view of the world, and conſequently more injurious to the cauſe of religion.

But then, let none imagine that a diffidence of his own perſeverance and conſtancy will *excuſe* him from engaging in religion at all. Whatever diſtruſt one may have of himſelf, ſtill he is to enter upon the ſervice of God, truſting in that grace which is ſufficient for him.

There are ſome, who, when they are exhorted to a religious profeſſion, will ſay, This is doubtleſs the duty of ſome people; but we are afraid, *we* ſhall not act up to our profeſſion if we ſhould make one; and we think beſt to delay it for the preſent. But tell me; when will you be delivered from

this fear? When will you have such assurance of your own strength, that you can make the profession without any concern, lest you dishonor it? Whenever you make it, be it ten, or twenty years hence, must it not be made with a fear and concern, lest you fail in practice? Without this fear, would you not be wanting in humility and watchfulness? Let not your fear then restrain you from engaging in your duty; but rather excite you to prayer and diligence, that you may obtain grace to help in performing your duty.

If you feel your dependence on the grace of God, why may you not trust this now, as well as at another time? It is as free and as sufficient now, as it will be hereafter. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

2. Christians, we see, ought to walk with great prudence and caution, that they may shun the errors and follies, which would degrade their character and obstruct their usefulness.

In them a few dead flies may taint the whole pot of ointment; a little folly may viciate all the savour of their good name, and corrupt all the sweet perfume of their wisdom. Folly in them will be more observable, than in those, who never applied themselves to wisdom. The partial world will not bear from them so much as it will from fools. Envy and malice will exaggerate their faults, and the noisy tongue of slander will trumpet them around. "Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

3. Be not fond of the company of those, who are known enemies to religion; for they will endeavour to seduce you into folly, and then will make use of your folly to discourage religion.

There are, indeed, but few men, who will openly and directly deny, that there is such a thing as religion; but there are many who by their practice shew, that they wish there were no such thing. They will

acknowledge in general, that religion is good and important; but will cavil and diſpute againſt almoſt every particular thing which belongs to it—beſure againſt every thing which condemns their temper, and reproves their practice. They oppoſe all the means of ſupporting it in the world—they deride all the forms of it, and eſpecially thoſe which are moſt in uſe—they endeavour to ſubvert the order of Chriſt's kingdom, and to introduce into it error and confuſion—they neither enter into it themſelves, nor ſuffer thoſe, who are entering, to go in. Thus, while they pretend a general regard to religion, they manifeſt a real enmity againſt it.

The Chriſtian, eſpecially the youthful Chriſtian ſhould cautiouſly avoid the company and converſation of ſuch enemies. It is the advice of Solomon, "Ceaſe my ſon, to hear the inſtructions, which cauſe to err from the words of knowledge." It was the wiſdom of David, to "keep his mouth with a bridle, while the wicked were before him." "Bleſſed is the man who walketh not in the counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtandeth in the way of ſinners, nor ſitteth in the ſeat of the ſcornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

4. Our ſubject teaches us, that, in our religious conduct, we ſhould guard againſt every imprudence which might cauſe our good to be evil ſpoken of.

A little folly is highly diſguſtful in thoſe, who are in reputation for wiſdom. See then, that ye be wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves. Attend not only to the more important duties of religion, but alſo to the leaſt commandments of the goſpel. Make conſcience of every thing which has a near connexion with a virtuous character. Indulge in no liberties, which would turn to the diſhonor of religion. Decline thoſe levities, which indicate a careleſs and worldly ſpirit. But while you avoid a light and airy behavior, aſſume not

an affected and hypocritical auſterity. Be cheerful, but not vain—ſerious, but not moroſe. Shun all fellowſhip with ſinners in their unfruitful works, but ſtill ſhew a benevolence to all men, and a peculiar regard for good men. Study to be uſeful by your works; but be not oſtentatious of your works. Maintain a modeſty of behaviour; but affect not that awkward humility, which courts applauſe by ſpeaking diminutively of itſelf. Shew out of a good converſation your works with meekneſs of wiſdom.

5. Our ſubject teaches us, that we never ought to pay much attention to ill reports, which the known enemies of wiſdom utter concerning its friends.

A little folly is conſpicuous in one, who is reputed wiſe; and a ſmall tranſgreſſion is ſeverely marked and cenſured in one who is eſteemed godly. When therefore we hear evil ſpoken of a man, whoſe virtuous character is well eſtabliſhed, we may charitably preſume, that his conduct has been miſunderſtood, or an infirmity has been imputed as a fault, or a real fault magnified beyond its demerits. If the ſlander comes only from one, who is known to be unfriendly to him, or to his profeſſion, or to his religious character, let it return back on the author. For it is more credible that an enemy will miſunderſtand, or miſrepreſent the actions of a good man, than that a good man will groſsly depart from his habitual conduct and eſtabliſhed character.

Solomon ſays, "He who utters a ſlander is a fool." He is a fool, becauſe he diſcovers a miſchievous diſpoſition, trifles with truth and ſports with human happineſs. He does evil without a proſpect of advantage to himſelf; and brings on himſelf the miſchief, which he intended for another. "The fool's mouth is his own deſtruction, and his lips are the ſnare of his ſoul."

6. We ſee, that we ſhould be ſolicitous, rather to become wiſe, than to be thought ſo; rather to maintain the power, than to acquire the reputation of religion.

How much ſoever we may deſire a good reputation, it is really of little value fartheir than we deſerve it. We all chooſe to ſtand well in the opinion of the world; but if we ſtand too high, our ſtanding is precarious. It will be no eaſy matter to preſerve it. We are more expoſed to envy and obloquy; more liable to fall, and to be wounded by a fall, than if we ſtood on humbler ground.

If men think better of us than we deſerve, they will expect more from us than we can do. Diſappointed in their expectations, they will cenſure us more ſeverely, than if we had made more modeſt pretenſions. "For a man to ſeek his own glory, is not glory. A man's pride will bring him low; but honor will uphold the humble in ſpirit."

Our greateſt ambition ſhould be to ſtand approved in the ſight of God, to do our duty, correct our errors, improve in every virtuous temper, and abound in thoſe works, which are of good report, and worthy of praiſe. When our reputation for wiſdom riſes by wiſe improvements, and our character for religion is ſupported by religious practice, we are in little danger from the obloquy of the world. The ſhafts of calumny will not pierce deep; they will either paſs harmleſs by us, or, falling on the buckler of our righteouſneſs, will recoil on him who ſends them. The apoſtles, conſcious of their entegrity and the divine approbation, could paſs through good report and evil report; through honor and diſhonor, without elevation in the one caſe, or depreſſion in the other.

Finally, brethren, whatſoever things are true, honeſt, juſt, pure, lovely, and of good report; if there be any virtue, any praiſe, think on theſe things; and the things, which ye have heard and learned, theſe chooſe and practiſe, and the God of peace will be with you.

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